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Adolescent Refugees' Judgments of Harm in War and Resettlement Contexts

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Adolescent Refugees' Judgments of Harm in War and Resettlement Contexts

By

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Abstract

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Protracted wars in the Middle East have forced millions of people to flee and resettle in Western countries. Adolescents might be most affected by their war and resettlement experiences, yet have received limited attention in developmental research. The purpose of the current study was to determine how younger (12-14-year-olds) and older (17-19-year-olds) adolescent refugees from Syria make judgments about harm in unprovoked and provoked situational contexts. Fifty-nine newcomer Syrian adolescent refugees (30 boys and 29 girls) living in Canada were interviewed about straightforward and complex situations involving harm (i.e., hitting). All participants provided negative evaluations of harm in response to general questions and almost all stated that there should be a law against hitting. The majority of evaluations were stable, meaning not contingent on parental authority, school rules, or common societal practice. All participants in the baseline (unprovoked) condition, and almost all participants in the survival condition provided negative evaluations of harm in Syrian war and Canadian resettlement contexts. The majority of participants provided negative evaluations of harm in retribution conditions, and a small but significant proportion evaluated harm as less acceptable in the resettlement context than in the war context. Negative evaluations elicited moral justifications (i.e., welfare, equality), whereas positive evaluations elicited nonmoral justifications (i.e., personal, authority/rules, and retaliation). The Canadian resettlement context elicited more authority/rules considerations than did the Syrian war context. Younger adolescents were significantly more likely than older adolescents to justify negative evaluations based on authority/rules. Older adolescents were more likely than younger adolescents to provide mixed evaluations for retribution conditions. Significant gender differences were not found. Cultural considerations, social and educational implications, and future directions are discussed.

Keywords: moral development, social domain theory, Syrian refugees, adolescence, war, resettlement

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Dedication

I dedicate this research to my parents, who upheld the moral principles of welfare, equality, and respect toward all people everyday of their lives. May their spirit live on in all of us whose lives they have touched. Thank you to my sister, whose guidance during my childhood, has been influential.

Adolescent Refugees' Judgments of Harm in War and Resettlement Contexts

Protracted conflict and human rights violations in parts of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Central America have spawned a global refugee crisis of unprecedented magnitude. In 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported forced displacement statistics exceeding 70 million worldwide, including 26 million refugees seeking resettlement in neighboring or Western countries, more than half of whom were under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2019a). The number of refugees able to safely return to their homelands has reached the lowest levels in over three decades, generating an upsurge in refugees seeking permanent resettlement in Canada.

Internationally recognized as the most protracted and urgent humanitarian crisis of modern times, the Syrian war has resulted in an estimated 6.7 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2019a), more than half of whom are children and adolescents. Canada has admitted more than 54,000 Syrian refugees (Foley, Bose, & Grigri, 2018) and has given priority to women, children, and families, resulting in a higher proportion of resettled children and adolescents than adults (Statistics Canada, 2019). Statistics indicate that 50% of Syrian—compared to 37% of non-Syrian—refugees are under the age of 18 (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2019). Given that half of the Syrian refugee population are either school-aged or soon to be school-aged, research investigating their social and cognitive development is essential.

In response to the annual influx of school-aged refugees into Canada, researchers (MacNevin, 2012; Ratković, Kovačević, Brewer, Ellis, Ahmed, & Baptiste-Brady, 2017; Stewart, 2012; Stewart, 2017) have repeatedly raised concern that education stakeholders might be inaccurately or inadequately informed about their experiences. Refugee children and adolescents have been forced to flee their homelands due to war or persecution; how they interpret their experiences provides much needed information to practitioners and policymakers about their social development.

According to reports put out by international government and non-government organizations, including the United Nations, adolescents are of particular relevance in studies on armed conflict (Barber, 2009; UNICEF, 2009). For example, adolescents—more frequently than other age groups—are recruited as soldiers (Joseph, 2011; Woodward & Galvin, 2009) and are the most active participants in resistance movements (Sawyer et al., 2012). Consequently, they are likely to be most psychologically affected. However, this group has thus far been largely neglected in psychological research.

Given their exposure to violence and experiences of harm during war and resettlement, how adolescents make judgments about harm requires research attention, and revives long-standing theoretical debates about morality. Some theoretical perspectives have positioned war-exposed children and adolescents as "morally disengaged" (Bandura, 2002, p. 102) or "morally truncated" (Ferguson & Cairns, 1996, p. 716). Empirical studies based on alternative theories (Turiel, 1983) have demonstrated that war-exposed children and adolescents are able to make judgments about moral principles of welfare, justice, and equality (Posada & Wainryb, 2008; Turiel, 1999). To date, we still have not answered the following fundamental questions: How do adolescent refugees actually think about harm, and how can the findings best be explained?

Despite urgent calls over the past two decades for in-depth quantitative and clinical research on the implications of war on moral development (Cairns & Dawes, 1996), the evidence base remains sparse. The refugee crisis has been intensifying and the majority of those affected by the violence and persecution are of school age. War-exposed adolescents in particular have been the most understudied in the extant research (Barber, 2009), adding to the pressure on developmental scientists to bring this group into focus. In the present study, therefore, I focused attention on the moral development of adolescent refugees. Given that adolescents have been centripetal figures in the Syrian uprising, I explored how resettled adolescent refugees from war-torn Syria think about moral transgressions involving harm.

Moral Development: Theoretical Perspectives

The concept of morality has been the subject of discourse in the fields of philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Within the field of psychology, moral development has been extensively addressed via cultural psychology and social-cognitive theories. Theories of cultural psychology view morality as a relativist concept, meaning that moral orientations differ by cultural group (Benedict, 1934; Shweder, 1991). Alternative social-cognitive models proposed by Bandura (1973, 1986), Piaget (1965), Kohlberg (1973), and Turiel (1983) view moral concepts as absolute and generalizable across cultures. In the present study, I investigated the extent to which moral concepts are generalizable to a group of Syrian Muslim adolescent refugees with exposure to Western and non-Western contexts, and explored how social domain theory (Turiel, 1983) might explain their moral reasoning.

Cultural psychology. According to cultural psychologists (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder, 1991), moral principles are upheld in all cultures. However, the meaning assigned to moral concepts varies across cultures. The underlying theoretical assumption has been that the moral development of children is culturally determined. Issues of welfare, rights, and justice might exist in all cultures, but their emphasis or salience varies across cultural contexts. It is proposed that in Western and presumably individualistic cultures, rights and freedoms predominate. By contrast, in non-Western, presumably collectivistic cultures, it is adherence to community and religious traditions that are dominant.

Cultural psychologists (i.e., Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997) have explored moral development in comparative studies between Hindu communities in Orissa, India and White, Christian, and Jewish middle-class communities in Chicago. From interviews with these groups, three clusters of ethics were proposed: (a) autonomy (concepts of welfare, justice and rights), (b) community (reference to duty, respect for hierarchical structure, and interdependency), and (c) divinity (spirit, sacred order, tradition, and sin). Cultural differences between Brahmans living in India and White Christian and Jewish communities living in the United States were said to support a dichotomous distinction between Western societies as individualistic and South Asian societies as collectivistic. The researchers concluded that in individualistic cultures, moral orientations are contingent on the preservation of individual rights, whereas in collectivistic cultures, moral orientations are contingent on social obligation.

Social-cognitive theories. In contrast to cultural psychology perspectives, which situate moral development in relation to group functioning and cultural influences, social-cognitive perspectives situate moral development in relation to the individual's social interactions and cognitive processes. The main premise is that, beginning in childhood and throughout adolescence and adulthood, individuals are actively and bidirectionally engaged with the social environment. In other words, individuals influence and are influenced by their social world. Bandura (1973), Piaget (1965), Kohlberg (1973), and Turiel (1983) have been influential in shaping the theoretical and empirical landscape of moral development within the broad framework of social-cognitive theory.

Social learning cognitive theory. Bandura's (1973, 1986) social learning perspective was that moral issues are actively internalized via observational learning that begins in childhood. Through observational learning, children incorporate moral standards of right and wrong. Observational learning is a process by which a child first watches a model (e.g., peer, parent, teacher) engage in a specific behavior, then internalizes that behavior, and develops a set of rules regarding social contexts in which the behaviors might be appropriate. Individuals self-regulate their behaviors based on their internal moral standards and the perceived consequences of their actions. Anticipation of the consequences either encourages or discourages moral agency.

Moral agency refers to the inhibition of negative acts and promotion of prosocial acts toward others (Bandura, 1990). Moral agency is based on how the actor justifies the act. In a war context, actors might shift or disseminate responsibility; minimize, disregard or distort the consequences; or dehumanize the victim. These types of justifications increase the likelihood of moral disengagement, which is defined as "the cognitive restructuring of inhumane conduct into a benign or worthy one" (Bandura, 2002, p. 101). Bandura posited that externally imposed safeguards are required to prevent moral disengagement due to the differences across individuals in both internal self-regulatory mechanisms and moral standards.

Cognitive-developmental stage theories. Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1973) concurred with Bandura's (1986) view that moral development occurs via the child's social interaction with the environment. However, their perspectives departed from Bandura's social learning approach with respect to how children develop moral concepts and the central role of moral reasoning. For Piaget and Kohlberg, morality is grounded in the philosophical perspective that moral concepts are universally accepted and generalizable across contexts. These theorists posit that morality is concerned with how people *ought* to treat each other. In other words, moral behaviors are obligatory and not determined by individual preferences or social consensus. Moral development was defined as a child's "evolving concepts of fairness and justice in the context of peer, family, and school interactions, and intergroup relationships, which includes topics such as…prejudice [and] discrimination" (Killen, Margie, & Sinno, 2006, p. 156). Such conceptual growth in the construction of judgments about welfare, justice, equal treatment, and rights was viewed as an ontogenetic developmental process that is attributed to experiences with the environment rather than to genetic makeup (Lambert & Johnson, 2011).

Piaget's constructivist theory. Piaget (1965) established the theoretical foundation for Kohlberg's (1973) stage-and-sequence theory and Turiel's (1983) social domain theory. Piaget's constructivist theory underscored the central role of cognitive processes during cooperative activities, which involves the reciprocal exchange of ideas between individuals. According to Piaget, moral development occurs via a two-stage process—heteronomy and autonomy. Heteronomous thinking is characterized by a rigid adherence to rules and obedience to authority

because it is based on unilateral respect for adults. Moral judgments, then, are based on whether or not an act is permissible by authority (e.g., parent-sanctioned, law). What is considered *good* or *right* is defined by the adult. The interplay of increased engagement in social life and qualitative changes in psychological processes as individuals advance from childhood through adolescence facilitates progression from the heteronomous stage toward the autonomous stage of thinking. At the autonomous stage, rules are no longer viewed as sacred and imposed by authority but instead are derived from mutual consent. Therefore, rules are worthy of respect but can be modified through cooperation. Piaget posited that moral principles of justice and fairness are inherent to relationships of cooperation. Through reciprocal exchange, individuals develop a sense of obligation toward each other and an understanding that the rights of one participant are equal to the rights of another.

Kohlberg's six-stage theory. Kohlberg (1973) retained the seminal elements of Piaget's (1965) theory that knowledge is constructed through social interactions and that moral principles are universal and generalizable. Similar to Piaget, Kohlberg maintained a stage theory approach spanning childhood through adolescence. Kohlberg described moral development as a series of six stages that occur in an invariant and irreversible sequence. Each stage is more advanced than the previous and progresses towards a more adequate conceptualization of moral concepts.

At Stages 1 and 2, moral concepts of fairness, equality, and reciprocity are viewed in relation to personal concerns and consequences. Stage 1 is characterized by reward and punishment. The type and magnitude of the consequence determines whether the act is viewed as *good* or *bad*. The severity of the punishment signifies the seriousness of the moral transgression. Stage 2 is characterized by reciprocity insofar as the child's personal needs are satisfied. Rules are considered fair as long as they serve the child's personal interests.

Stages 3 and 4 are characterized by a conventional understanding of moral concepts, which is based on the adherence to societal expectations of fairness and reciprocity as well as the impact on interpersonal relationships. Personal interests and concerns are differentiated from societal values. At Stage 3, morality is defined as "being good" and following the Golden Rule of treating others the same as one would like to be treated. Stage 4 constitutes a recognition for the social order and a system of shared rules. Morality is based on obedience to authority and following the rules of a society.

Stages 5 and 6 mark the highest forms of moral reasoning, which is characterized by the differentiation between societal standards and individual rights. Stage 5—typically achieved during adolescence—is characterized by the acceptance of equal and individual rights of every person. By Stage 6, achieved during adulthood, the person has developed an orientation to the universal moral principles of justice, human rights, and respect for each individual's dignity.

Kohlberg (1984) posited that progression from one stage to the next is dependent on the "moral atmosphere" (p. 571); a war context, then, would hinder the attainment of Stage 6 reasoning given the frequent exposure to violence, poverty, and persecution. Empirical research, however, has yielded divergent findings showing that children living amidst armed conflict demonstrate an orientation toward universal principles of fairness and welfare (Ardila-Rey, Killen, & Brenick, 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008). These findings were based on social domain theory, which evolved from Kohlberg's (1973) stage-and-sequence approach, and was the theoretical framework for the current study.

Social domain theory. Turiel's (1983) social domain theory was influenced by the stage theories of Piaget (1965) and Kohlberg (1973). However, in contrast to Kohlberg's formulations, Turiel posited that moral development constitutes a separate domain of thinking. In other words, children simultaneously develop multiple forms of reasoning from social interactions in their multifaceted environments. Through these interactions, they develop knowledge about the social world that is organized into distinct moral and non-moral domains. The moral domain consists of concepts that are universally applicable and are thereby not contingent on individual preferences or social conventions. These concepts are based on moral obligations of welfare, fairness, and rights. The personal domain is concerned with individual preferences and pertains to an individual's personal safety, comfort, and health—issues considered nonsocial. The social conventional domain, described in Kohlbeg's conventional stages, pertains to concepts that are "contextually relative" (Smetana, 2006, p. 121), including obedience to authority, social norms, and interpersonal relationships.

Within each domain, an individual's reasoning is organized within a system of justification categories. Examples of justification categories that have been commonly used in reasoning in Western and non-Western contexts are welfare of others, fairness, approval of an authority figure (e.g., parent, teacher), and personal choice (e.g., Davidson, Turiel, & Black, 1983; Gingo, Roded, & Turiel, 2017; Smetana, Ahmad, & Wray-Lake, 2015).

Turiel (1983) found evidence of age differences in the use of justification categories in studies on harm. Results from Davidson et al. (1983), for example, showed that children of different ages used the welfare category to justify negative evaluations of harm for familiar events. However, older children more than younger children used the welfare category for unfamiliar moral events. Moreover, fairness and obligatoriness justifications were more often used among older children than younger children. The findings also showed that the use of prudential and personal choice justifications increased with age, whereas the use of the punishment justification decreased with age. My aim, in the present study of adolescent refugees from Syria, was to examine qualitative differences in the way younger adolescents (12-14-year-olds) and older adolescents (17-19-year-olds) reason about familiar war and resettlement situations involving harm.

Criterion judgments. How individuals determine whether a social issue is classified as moral, personal, or conventional is based on criterion judgments. Individuals construct the parameters of a domain based on a set of criteria. Criterion judgments indicate the parameters that distinguish one domain from another. According to Turiel (1983), criterion judgments that distinguish moral from nonmoral domains are based on eight parameters: obligatoriness, impersonality, alterability, universality, relativism, social consensus, and institutional status (i.e., rule contingency and authority jurisdiction).

Research examining criterion judgments demonstrates that children develop social knowledge at an early age and organize this knowledge into domains. As children gain more experience with their social world, their moral reasoning becomes increasingly more complex because they have more prior experiences that influence their social judgments. Davidson et al. (1983), for example, found that 6-year-olds have difficulty distinguishing between moral and conventional events that are unfamiliar, but by 10 years of age, children extract information from unfamiliar events, reflect upon them, and use this social knowledge to distinguish between moral and conventional domains. In a summary of the evidence from numerous studies, Turiel (1983) concluded that criterion judgments become increasingly more stable with age.

Nucci and Turiel (1978) conducted an observational study of preschool interactions to determine the parameters of the moral and social conventional domains. They conducted interviews with 4- and 5-year-olds who had witnessed events that were classified as either social conventional or moral. Children were asked what they observed and whether or not there was a rule in their school about the observed act. To elicit criterion judgments about rule contingency, children were asked, "What if there weren't a rule in school about [the observed act], would it be all right to do [the observed act] then?" If the participant stated the act would still not be all right if there were no rule, the judgment was considered to be unalterable and, therefore, classified in the moral domain. However, if the participant stated that the act would now be all right, the judgment was deemed to be rule contingent and, therefore, classified in the social-conventional domain.

Tisak and Turiel (1988), in their examination of moral (i.e., hitting and stealing) and conventional (i.e., wearing pajamas at school) transgressions, elicited criterion judgments about authority jurisdiction. For the moral transgression, most first, second, and fifth graders (94%) indicated that moral transgressions would be wrong even if permitted by an authority. For the conventional transgression, 84% of first and second graders in comparison to 50% of fifth graders stated it would be wrong even if permitted by an authority. These age differences point out that in some situations, the boundaries between moral and conventional acts might become more distinct as children approach adolescence. Whether and how criterion judgments might differ between younger and older adolescents is further examined in the present study.

In the present study, I presented younger adolescents (12-14-year-olds) and older adolescents (17-19-year-olds) with a general question and contextual stories about harm. After providing an evaluation of a moral transgression (act of harm), I asked participants to provide judgments based on the following criteria: authority jurisdiction (i.e., parent-sanctioned), rule contingency (i.e., school rules and law) and social consensus (i.e., common practice). Similar to previous studies (e.g., Tisak & Turiel, 1988), I expected that the acts of harm would elicit negative evaluations and would be judged as non-contingent on parental authority, school rules, law, or common practice for both age groups.

Domain coordination. Although the moral domain is central to many situations that are straightforward or prototypical (e.g., arbitrary acts of harm), in multifaceted situations individuals coordinate different considerations. The process of coordination can involve weighing and balancing different moral considerations or moral and non-moral considerations (Turiel, 2015). Such situations can comprise moral and non-moral components that are in conflict with each other; hence, individuals engage in an active—as opposed to a passive—process of interpretation and reflection on social interactions. Given the complex nature of the social world, an individual might hold contradictory opinions within oneself and/or between oneself and others. For example, moral concerns for equality and reciprocity might conflict with respect for authority and social customs.

Early studies on social domain theory via observations and corresponding interviews of social behaviour demonstrated that young children distinguish between moral, conventional, and personal issues (e.g., Nucci, 1981; Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Nucci, Turiel, & Encarnacion-Gawrych, 1983). Taken together, interviews about hypothetical situations involving social issues, such as modes of dress (e.g., Geiger & Turiel, 1983), cleaning up toys (e.g., Weston & Turiel, 1980) and hitting (e.g., Tisak & Turiel, 1988) demonstrated that young children (3-year-olds) through to older adolescents (19-year-olds) reason about the moral domain differently from

the non-moral social-conventional and personal domains. Empirical evidence has also shown that children and adolescents make moral judgments about harm in coordination with judgments about conventions and personal concerns (e.g., Nucci, 1981). In other words, social reasoning can simultaneously include moral issues (e.g., welfare and justice) and conventional issues (e.g., rules and traditions), depending on the features of the situation (e.g., Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Tisak & Turiel, 1984).

How social domain theory applies to children and adolescents in diverse cultural contexts has also been studied. Empirical findings of studies in Nigeria (Hollos, Leis, & Turiel, 1986), Israel (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998), Colombia (Posada & Wainryb, 2008) and Hong Kong (Yau & Smetana, 2003), for example, showed children and adolescents distinguishing between moral and non-moral issues, and applying reasoning within and across domains accordingly. Studies based on social domain theory conducted in patriarchally organized societies have provided accounts of interpersonal and intrapersonal conflict that occurs within cultures. For example, a study comparing adolescent Druze Arabs in a traditional, hierarchically organized society was conducted in Israel (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998). The Druze culture is hierarchically organized, such that womens' freedom and rights are subordinated to the freedoms and rights of men (Barakat, Jamal, & Sasson-Levy, 2018). First, younger adolescent (13-year-olds), older adolescent (17-year-olds) and adult (ranging from 34 to 70 years of age) participants responded to general questions about moral issues that included freedom of speech, religion, and reproduction. Then, they responded to questions about situations in which these moral issues were presented in conflict with welfare of others, social norms, and respect for family authority.

Findings revealed that both Druze adolescents and adults viewed freedom of speech and religion as a universal right that is not contingent on laws, but viewed freedom of reproduction as less generalizable. However, justifications for restrictions on freedom of reproduction were based on moral issues pertaining to the welfare of children and pragmatic consequences. Restrictions imposed by husbands and fathers in the realm of freedom of choice in activities in the public sphere (i.e., work, education, friendship, and leisure) were deemed legitimate. In addition, the majority of adults and adolescents did not accept freedom of speech when situated in conflict with harm. Overall, results illustrated domain coordination of universal rights and freedoms, social consensus on the status of men versus women, and a prioritization of others' welfare over freedom of speech.

The study of Druze Arabs living in the Middle East (i.e., Turiel & Wainryb, 1998) illustrated the coordination of domains of knowledge in complex situations that presented conflicting moral, conventional, and personal issues. How do other groups from the Middle East reason about situations that present conflicting moral, conventional, and personal issues? In the present study, I explored how adolescent refugees exposed to war in the Middle East and forced to resettle in a Western country (i.e., Canada), reason about social issues. This question is relevant to the present refugee crisis, given the movement of cultural ideas and beliefs from non-Western to Western societies as well as the human rights violations that have occurred as a corollary of forced migration. According to social domain theory, variations that might occur in moral reasoning are a function of the situational context and informational assumptions.

Situational contexts. The situational context "encompasses all aspects of the person, all aspects of the environment, and their interrelations within the person-in-environment system" (Wapner & Demick, 2002, p. 8). Nucci and Turiel (2009) posited that moral reasoning becomes increasingly more complex as situational contexts become more complex. The complexity of the

situational context is determined by the characteristics of the individual, characteristics of the environment, and the interrelations between the individual and the environment (Wapner & Demick, 2002). The perception of multiple facets within a situational context (social, personal, and moral) facilitates domain coordination (Smetana, 2006). In other words, how an individual interprets the situational context influences the complexity of their moral reasoning. In multifaceted situational contexts, domain coordination occurs due to conflicting social goals across these domains (Turiel & Smetana, 1984).

With respect to the study of Druze in Israel (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998), findings revealed variations in moral reasoning because participants interpreted the situational contexts in different ways. Situational contexts perceived to be multidimensional triggered the coordination of conflicting social goals and norms, including personal choice, authority directives, welfare of others, and community ties. In social domain theory, why social reasoning varies across individuals within the same cultural context has been addressed by examining the role of informational assumptions.

Informational assumptions. Informational assumptions have been defined as knowledge about "what one correctly or incorrectly believes to be the facts regarding a given phenomenon" (Wainryb, 1991, p. 841). Informational assumptions cover a range of issues from the causes of particular phenomena (e.g., violence), to characteristics of a particular individual or group of individuals (e.g., refugees, Canadians), to estimations of risk from engaging in particular activities (e.g., child soldiering, smuggling refugees, stealing), to the physical features of a situational context itself (e.g., a crowded bus of refugees, a school playground), to name a few. The coordination of domains is dependent on the child's interpretation of the situational context. In turn, the interpretation depends on the informational assumptions about the event. If a group of individuals bring different informational assumptions (correct or incorrect) to a particular situational context, each will interpret the event differently, leading to variations in moral decisions.

Social-Cognitive Theories, Harm, and War

Social domain theory and harm. The moral concept of welfare has been the topic of numerous studies examining moral transgressions of harm (e.g., Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Posada & Wainryb, 2998; Smetana & Kim, 1987; Wainryb, Brehl, & Matwin, 2005). Several studies have examined judgments about harm in neighborhood and school contexts (Pitner & Astor, 2008; Smetana, Killen, & Turiel, 1991; Tisak & Turiel, 1984) within the framework of social domain theory. The issue of harm has been the subject of numerous studies on moral reasoning from the social domain perspective in both Western and non-Western contexts (e.g., Smetana & Kim, 1987; Tisak & Turiel, 1988). Typically, researchers first asked participants to evaluate the act of hitting as a universal moral transgression (i.e., "Is it all right nor not all right to hit another person?"), and then evaluate the act of hitting in different situational contexts such as games (e.g., Helwig, Hildebrandt, & Turiel, 1995;), parental spanking (e.g., Wainryb, 1991), and playground conflict (e.g., Wainryb et al., 2005). Overall, findings showed that participants evaluated harm as a moral transgression that was not contingent on rules, authority, or personal goals.

Astor's (1994, 1998) body of work on school violence in high schools has provided deeper insight into the role of informational assumptions in social reasoning. His work has focused on school spaces that might be considered "undefined," meaning that "social monitoring, physical upkeep, interpersonal care, and personal human involvement are defined as outside the personal responsibility of community members" (p. 215). Being undefined, these spaces generate varied interpretations, which lead to varying behaviors. Astor (1998) hypothesized that students' informational assumptions about the roles, responsibilities and presence (or lack thereof) of teachers might influence the way they interpret different school spaces. In one study, Astor (1998) examined how high school students and teachers interpreted violence-prone school spaces. Results revealed similarities and differences between students' and teachers' informational assumptions about danger and jurisdiction of responsibility in violence-prone undefined school spaces, leading to varied judgments about violent events. Students and teachers had similar informational assumptions about danger and the risk of violence in undefined spaces. However, students believed that teachers had a responsibility to monitor undefined spaces and to protect students from harm, whereas teachers experienced moral dilemmas about whose role it was to intervene when a violent event occurred in an undefined public space. Findings revealed that conflicting informational assumptions brought by teachers and students to a situational context, yielded varied interpretations of the events and, therefore, variability in social reasoning.

To illustrate, Astor (1994) conducted a study comparing the moral judgments of aggressive (i.e., having previously engaged in violent acts) and nonaggressive students (mean ages 8, 10, and 12). Findings illustrated that groups differed in their harm-oriented assumptions, leading to varied judgments of violent events. Specifically, aggressive students were at least three times more likely than non-aggressive students to judge peer-related violence as retribution for morally-based provocations such as name calling, lying, stealing, and hitting. However, these findings were not reproduced in other contexts (i.e., parent-child and husband-wife scenarios), providing evidence for the variability in informational assumptions and cross-domain coordination across contexts. This latter finding has provided support for examining and understanding violence within the context in which it occurs.

Kohlberg's stage theory and war. The issue of harm has received limited attention in contexts of war and forced displacement (Ardila-Rey, Killen, & Brenick, 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008). The earliest studies conducted in war contexts were based on Kohlberg's (1973) theory. These studies were conducted in Northern Ireland (e.g., Breslin, 1982; Cairns & Conlon, 1985; Ferguson & Cairns, 1996; Fields, 1973), and were concerned with the extent to which children and adolescents growing up amidst armed conflict might develop impairments in moral reasoning or be socialized toward violence. Findings of these studies were mixed. In some studies, researchers have concluded that children and adolescents growing up amidst violence have "suffered a severe disruption in the development of moral judgment" (Fields, 1979, p. 71), whereas in recent studies, researchers have concluded that they develop "moral maturity" (Ferguson & Cairns, 2002, p. 441).

For example, based on Kohlberg's (1973) stage theory, Ferguson and Cairns (1996) compared the moral reasoning of children and adolescents living in neighborhoods of high violence to the moral reasoning of children and adolescents living in neighborhoods of low violence in Northern Ireland. On a survey of moral reflection, participants provided evaluations

and follow-up justifications about the importance of several social and moral values (e.g., life, law, and justice) in different situations. Justifications were mapped onto Kohlberg's stages of moral development. Results showed that participants from low violence areas reasoned at higher stages than did participants from high violence areas, providing evidence to support Kohlberg's (1973) view that the moral atmosphere of war impeded progress toward higher stages of moral development.

However, results of a later study by the same authors (Ferguson & Cairns, 2002) using a similar procedure, produced contradictory findings. Ferguson and Cairns (2002) conducted a cross-national study comparing the moral reasoning of adolescents (12-14-year olds and 15-16-year-olds) in violence-prone Northern Ireland to their counterparts in the Republic of Ireland and Scotland. Results showed that adolescents living in Northern Ireland scored higher on the Sociomoral Reflection Measure than did their Scottish counterparts and scored similarly on the measure to their Republic of Ireland counterparts. Moreover, older adolescents scored higher than younger adolescents, showing an increase in "moral maturity" (Ferguson & Cairns, 2002, p. 723) with age. Given that the earlier study was conducted locally and the later study was conducted cross-nationally, Ferguson and Cairns concluded that variations in moral reasoning might be explained by variations in the dynamics of the conflict—a factor that was targeted in the local study. The earlier local study included participants living in specified locations identified as high or low violence areas, whereas the later cross-national study included participants living in a wide range of locations. The contrasting findings raise questions regarding the role of the situational context and informational assumptions, which have been pivotal features of social domain research.

Harm, war, and social domain theory. Social domain research on the moral reasoning of war-exposed children and adolescents has been limited to studies in Colombia. Researchers (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008) compared the moral reasoning of children and adolescents living in low-violence and high-violence areas in Colombia. These studies demonstrated that, despite exposure to political violence, children as young as 6-years-old recognized what makes harm wrong (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008), providing evidence that young children growing up amidst violence reason morally about the issue of harm.

Ardila-Rey et al. (2009) and Posada and Wainryb (2008) each examined the moral judgments of Colombian children exposed to high levels of violence from guerilla and paramilitary attacks. Ardila-Rey et al. compared 94 6-, 9-, and 12-year-old, high-exposure, internally displaced children to 99 6-, 9-, and 12-year-old, low-exposure children in urban centers. Participants were asked whether hitting was all right or not all right in various situational contexts, and provided justifications for their evaluations. Justifications were coded as moral (bearing on concepts of welfare, justice, and rights), pro-social (bearing on interpersonal relationships), conventional (bearing on authority), or as retribution and self-defense. All participants stated that hitting was not all right in unprovoked situations. Furthermore, the majority of displaced and vast majority of nondisplaced children and adolescents negatively evaluated harm involving provocations. With respect to justifications, adolescents (12-year-olds) applied moral concepts more frequently than did children, and a small minority of the youngest displaced children (6-year-olds) approved of harm if permissible by

parents. Overall, despite exposure to violence, Colombian children of different ages recognized what made provoked and unprovoked hitting morally wrong.

Posada and Wainryb (2008) conducted a similar study in Colombia comparing the moral judgments of 48 6- to 9-year-old, internally displaced children to 48 13- to16-year-old, internally displaced adolescents. For general assessments, children were asked to evaluate whether inflicting harm was wrong, should be illegal in their own country, should be illegal in other countries, would be wrong even if permissible by law, or would be wrong even if it was common practice. Context-specific assessments were based on a hypothetical story about a protagonist harming a peer in contexts involving survival or revenge. In the survival condition, the protagonist stole either a bike, jacket, or "boombox" because his family did not have any money. In the revenge condition, the protagonist saw someone who was a part of a group that hurt his family, forcing them to move. In both situations, the protagonist inflicted harm on the other character. For the general assessments, all children stated that inflicting harm was wrong. For the survival condition, just about all (99%) participants negatively evaluated harm, and for the revenge condition, the majority of participants (76%) negatively evaluated harm. In addition, more adolescents than children (62% and 42%, respectively) provided justifications for their responses based on moral concerns of welfare or fairness. Children more than adolescents (37% and 19%, respectively) provided justifications based on rules and prudential concerns.

General assessments of harm in the Colombian studies provided convergent evidence that children and adolescents exposed to violence evaluate harm as wrong and develop concepts of welfare, justice, and rights. Findings of the context-specific assessments, however, were not as straightforward. Although the majority of participants negatively evaluated harm in the revenge condition, 24% of participants stated that inflicting harm was all right. Justifications in these context-specific conditions were also mixed: although the majority of participants based their reasoning on moral concerns of welfare and justice, 22% of participants based their reasoning on following rules and avoiding punishment. Moreover, in the revenge condition, 63% of participants based their reasoning on concerns that were not in the moral domain—fear of further retribution, importance of following rules, or fear of punishment. These mixed findings illustrated the complexity of moral reasoning in contexts that raise concerns for survival and revenge.

In the above studies of war-exposed children and adolescents, social domain theory brought to light the role of contextual features and informational assumptions in influencing social decisions. Moral reasoning became more complex as the context (i.e., environment and the individual's relations with the environment) became increasingly multifaceted (Smetana, 2006). Interpretations of the context were based on informational assumptions, which were the individual interpretations of facts relevant to the context (Wainryb, 1991). In general assessments of unprovoked situations, children made unambiguous judgments that harm was wrong. However, in war situations that brought to bear concerns of loss, survival, revenge, or retribution, moral reasoning about harm was varied and complex. From a cognitive-developmental perspective, these variations characterize changes in thinking that occur over the course of development as individuals gain experience with their social world.

Apart from the two studies conducted in Colombia (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008), research on the application of domain theory to the social development of war-exposed children remains sparse. The studies conducted in Colombia about the civil war combined with studies in non-Western patriarchal contexts and Western contexts informed the

purpose and design of the present study examining the moral reasoning of adolescent refugees from war-affected Syria presently living in Canada. In the present study of refugees exposed to both Western and non-Western contexts and exposed to political violence, I set out to elucidate the interplay of moral, social conventional, and personal domains in social reasoning.

Definitions and Social Contexts

Refugees. A refugee, according to the UN Convention and Protocol (UNHCR, 1951), is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (p. 3). The experience of being a refugee generally comprises three consecutive phases: (a) preflight, (b) flight, and (c) resettlement (e.g., Lustig, et al., 2004). I explored how adolescent refugees think about harm in situations that are common occurrences in each of these phases.

Pre-flight. During the preflight phase, armed conflict and political persecution is widespread (Lustig et al., 2004). The source of conflict is the erosion of government control which gives rise to regional instability. Tensions mount, culminating in civil war due to ideological differences between representatives of different groups such as rebel groups, government forces, or military groups. Children and adolescents are particularly at risk of recruitment as soldiers. They view combat as a means to escape poverty, to survive, to defend their group or ideology, or to protect their family. Woodward and Galvin (2009) reported that children and adolescents are easily bullied, naïve, and likely to follow orders without questioning authority. Threats to survival, fear of attacks by opposition groups, and loss of home and family, force families to flee their homes.

Flight. The flight phase begins with a sudden forced evacuation (Woodward & Galvin, 2009). The journey typically involves a combination of ground, sea, and air travel, with the help of strangers, people smugglers, or humanitarian aid workers (Fisher, 2014). Forced migrants board overcrowded buses and boats in desperate attempts to escape war and persecution, which often results in conflict between passengers. Family separation is common, as parents often send one child alone to Europe or North America if they cannot afford transit for the whole family. The flight phase typically culminates in indefinite asylum in displacement camps, until planning has commenced for the resettlement phase (Kousoulis, Ioakeim-Ioannidou, & Economopoulos, 2017).

Resettlement. A resettled refugee refers to a person who has been granted permanent resident status by a host country on the basis of a well-founded fear of returning to their home country (Statistics Canada, 2019). During resettlement, school-aged refugees might experience physical and psychological harm during integration into their host societies. Pottie et al. (2015), in a systematic review of the literature on bullying and immigrants, found that refugee students have experienced significantly higher rates of bullying in their host society than their native-born counterparts. In addition, isolation, discrimination, and racism have been reported in Canadian

schools (Stewart, 2012, 2017). Given that Syria has been one of Canada's top source countries for refugees (Government of Canada, n.d.), the present study examined how Syrian refugees in Canada think about harm in preflight, flight, and resettlement phases of forced migration. My aim in this study was to elucidate the way Syrian refugees reason about moral issues in varied social contexts.

The Present Study

Social contexts of study. Syria is one of the most ancient kingdoms on earth, often described as the cradle of civilization (Danti, 2016), where the earliest achievements contributing to human progress, such as agricultural production and art, originated. The country is divided into three regions that include a Mediterranean coastal strip, a mountainous zone, and the Syrian desert. As shown in Figure 1, the country consists of 14 districts, including two districts (i.e., city and surrounding countryside) in the capital region of Damascus.

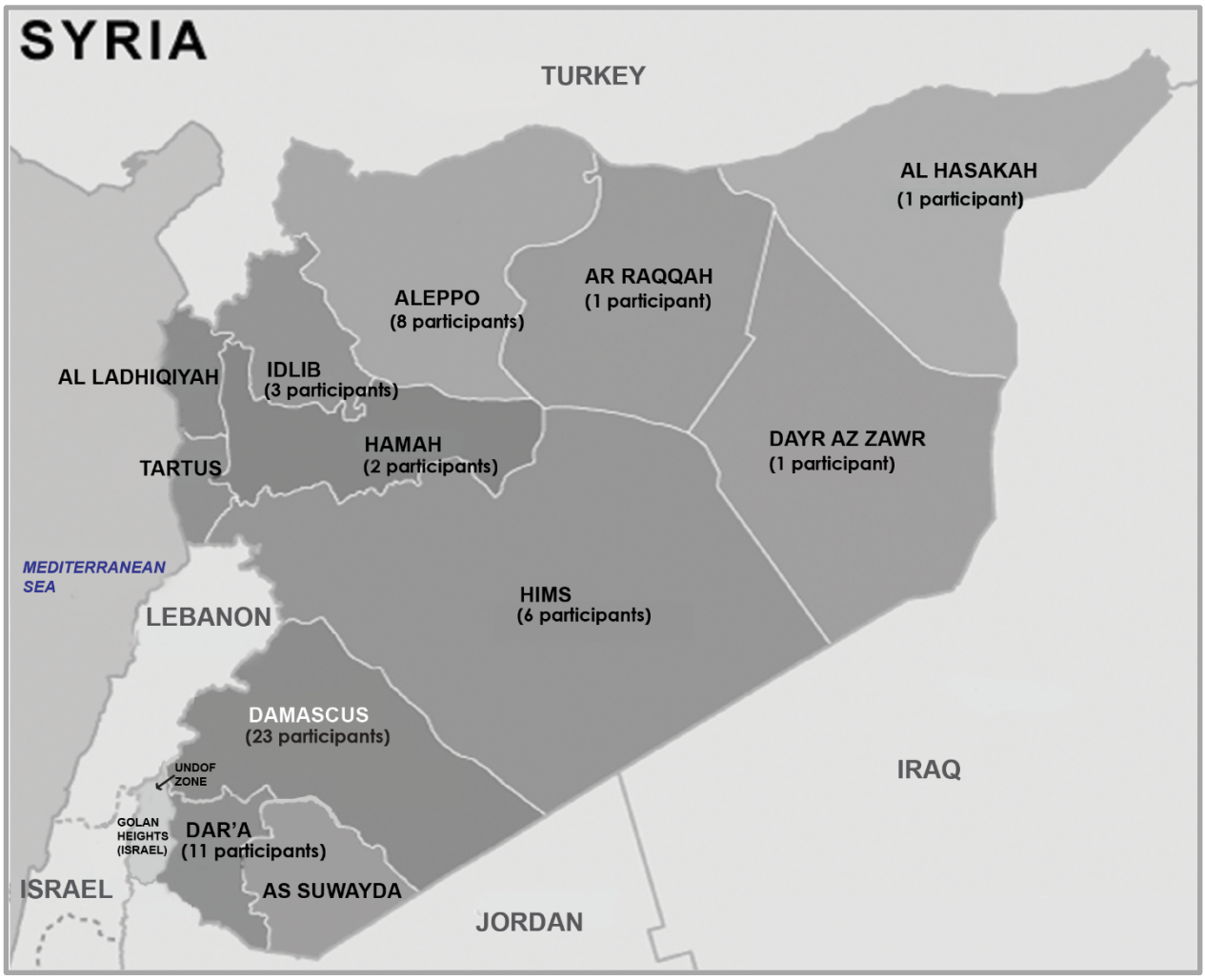

Figure 1. Map of study participants' birthplaces

The religion of Islam spread across the Middle East in the 7th century after a wave of Arab conquests (Hourani, 2010). The majority group (74%) is Sunni Muslim, and the minority group is Shia Muslim (16%). The remaining population is a mosaic of additional ethnic and religious sects including Alawites, various orthodox and modernist Christian denominations, a small Jewish community, Kurds (an Iranian ethnic group), and Druze (Beutgen, 2011).

Although recognized as an independent state in 1945, subsequent internal and international political conflicts resulted in a re-establishment of independence in 1961, at which time the Baath Party became the ruling party. In 1970, following a series of coups, General Hafez al-Assad assumed an autocratic presidency until his death in June 2000. His son, Bashar al-Assad, ran unopposed and was elected for a 7-year term. His inaugural speeches included promises to advance democracy and promote economic reform. However, an economic recession, bureaucratic corruption, and spoiled relationships with neighboring Arab states, contributed to political inertia that guaranteed his autocratic governance in perpetuity (Wieland, 2012).

Despite their disapprobation, Syrians were viewed as not having a propensity for activism or protest (Lindley, 2004). However, the series of civilian protests beginning in 2010 in neighboring Arab states against oppressive regimes, collectively called the Arab Spring, spurred nonviolent protests in Syria. The arrest of 15 youth for allegedly spraying anti-government graffiti on a school wall in Daraa was the stimulus for mass demonstrations that grew to the tens of thousands (Pearlman, 2016). Protests escalated, with millions demanding Al-Assad step down. In response, Bashar al-Assad authorized deadly force to subdue protestors, announcing, "If you want war, we are ready for war" (Pearlman, 2016, p. 891), signaling the beginning of the civil war.

Preflight, flight, and resettlement. The civil war, which began in 2011, marked the preflight phase for Syrian refugees. During this time, opposition groups aligned to form the Syrian National Council, a body responsible for bringing down Assad's government and establishing democracy. Resulting tensions between government and opposition forces led to a full-scale civil war involving several rebel factions, including pro-democratic groups, such as the Free Syrian Army, and extremist groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS; Wilson Center, n.d.). In 2012, the United Nations (UN) declared that Syria was in a state of civil war (Charbonneau & Evans, 2012). Government attacks against peaceful protestors continued, resulting in an estimated 16,000 civilians being killed and 200,000 being imprisoned (Anderson, 2012). The escalation of attacks and human rights violations across the country has been characterized by indiscriminate attacks on civilians and their homes, and the use of chemical weapons. The war has resulted in 13 million civilians requiring humanitarian assistance within the country and around the globe, and a death toll estimated to be more than half a million (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

The flight phase has been marked by a mass exodus of civilians. Thousands of civilians have fled across the Syrian-Iraqi border (Fagen, 2009; Salman, 2012), resulting in the establishment of displacement camps. Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon have served as escape routes (El-Khatib, Scales, Vearey, & Forsberg, 2013) to Europe and North America. Human smuggling operations have facilitated illegal border crossings via buses, taxis, or on foot, into neighboring countries where the refugees await host government or UNHCR assistance. If

denied assistance, the refugees may independently continue to their final destination by paying smugglers to cross the Mediterranean by boat. Upon arrival to their destination, the refugees apply for asylum.

The resettlement phase began in 2015, when the Canadian government arranged to have Syrian refugees airlifted to Canada from host countries that neighbor Syria, including Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon. Syria has been among the top source countries for refugees in Canada (El-Assal, 2016). The number of Syrian refugees that resettled in Canada over the past four years has reached 60,000. These numbers have been expected to rise (Chantler, 2019). The most vulnerable refugees have been accepted first, including families, children, and sexual minorities. During the resettlement phase, children have enrolled in schools, but have experienced difficulty making friends, bullying, peer rejection, and discrimination (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2019; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for Canada, 2017). Statistics Canada (2018) also reported an increase in hate crimes based on race and religion. How adolescent Syrian refugees think about the moral issues that arise during preflight, flight and resettlement was explored in the current study.

Purpose of study. Over the past five years, the number of people displaced due to conflict and human rights violations has increased from 45 million to more than 70 million world-wide, approximately half of whom have been under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2013; UNHCR, 2019a). The highest number of refugees—a total of 6.7 million—have been from Syria (UNHCR, 2019a), and Canada has been one of the top five destinations for Syrian resettlement (UNHCR, 2019b). Over the past four years, more than 60,000 Syrian refugees have resettled in Canada and this number is expected to grow. Moreover, Syrians make up the youngest group of refugees in Canada (Houle, 2019), pointing to an urgent need for research to inform educational interventions and policies that support Syrian students' social development and psychological wellbeing.

The growing number of refugees has sparked increased attention in psychological research. To date, however, the majority of research studies that have explored how refugees are affected by forced displacement, have concentrated on psychopathology. Although the psychopathology of refugees demands continued attention, studies have demonstrated that the majority of adolescent refugees do not meet the diagnostic criteria for a mental health disorder. Bronstein and Montgomery (2011) carried out a systematic and extensive review of research examining the psychological distress of refugees in Western countries. A comparison of prevalence rates across studies revealed that anywhere between 19% and 54% of refugee children and adolescents presented symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and between 3% and 30% presented symptoms of depression. Not only do these inconsistencies raise concerns regarding the research designs and diagnostic procedures, the statistics illustrate that many children and adolescents do not experience distress in ways that can be explained by mental health (Betancourt, 2011). As a consequence of the focus on clinical symptomatology, however, the impact of war and displacement on social development might be neglected. Researchers have recommended a shift away from studies on psychopathology toward developmental outcomes (Boyden, 2003; Cairns & Dawes, 1996). Studies on moral development might provide evidence of how, beyond psychopathology, the effects of war, displacement, and resettlement might be explained.

The research base on the moral development of adolescents exposed to war is sparse and studies to date have produced mixed findings due to variability in theoretical frameworks, sampling methods, and procedures. How adolescents exposed to war and human rights violations reason about welfare, justice, and reciprocity, therefore, requires further empirical attention. This question might best be explained by a social domain approach. Recent studies conducted in Colombia that were based on social domain theory (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008) provided a springboard for the present study. With a similar procedure as previous studies conducted in Colombia, I set out to examine how war-exposed adolescents reason about harm in situations bearing on retribution and survival. However, the present study departed from these earlier studies by examining a group of Muslim refugees from Syria that have resettled in Canada. Previous studies using the framework of domain theory have been conducted with groups in societies considered to be patriarchally organized (e.g., Hollos et al., 1986; Turiel & Wainryb, 1998) and separate studies have been conducted in armed conflict settings (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008). In the present study, I combined these factors to elucidate the complexities in moral reasoning as a function of exposure to multiple complex situations and contexts.

Studies examining moral reasoning from a social domain perspective have spanned a wide age range from early childhood through adolescence and into adulthood. Adolescence has been described in developmental science as a distinct developmental period (Steinberg, 2014). Developmental concerns are particularly salient during this critical stage—a time when individuals are susceptible to various family, social, school, political, and biological influences. Adolescents are particularly affected due to biological changes, qualitative changes in cognitive processes, and the transition to adult social roles—school completion, employment, and marriage (Sawyer et al., 2012).

Given that adolescence is a period defined both in terms of age and in terms of social roles, age parameters have varied in the extant literature. The ambiguity of the term *adolescence* is particularly relevant in contexts of war (Barber, 2009). Economic hardship and lack of child protection precipitate the adoption of adult roles at an early age. Furthermore, the prevalence of unregistered births due to lack of civil documentation (UNICEF, 2018) blur the distinctions between childhood and adolescence. Taking these issues into account, I compared the moral reasoning of a group of younger adolescents (defined as 12-14-year-olds) to that of a group of older adolescents (defined as 17-19-year olds). This age range has been selected as a target age group in several previous studies on war-exposed adolescents (e.g., Elbedour, ten Bensel, & Maruyama, 1993; Levey et al., 2016) and is similar to the parameters set by the World Health Organization (2001).

Despite their pivotal role in political conflict, adolescents within or from the Middle East have received inadequate attention in research. Barber and Schluterman (2009), in their review of 95 studies on adolescents and war, found that one-third of the studies focused on Israeli and Palestinian youth and a scarce number of studies focused on adolescents from Lebanon, Kuwait, and Iraq. The present study examined refugees originally from Syria, where the most violent conflicts in modern times have been recently taking place and where the majority of the population are under the age of 25 (World Population Review, 2019). Since the civil war began in 2011, Syrian refugee children and adolescents have gained international research attention (e.g.,Celik, Altay, Yurttutan, & Toruner, 2019; Çeri, Nasiroglu, Ceri, & Çetin, 2018; Jabbar & Zaza, 2014), as adolescents have been on the frontlines of the political resistance movement and

primary targets of attack. However, the main research focus has been the impact of war on mental health, such as interventions to address war trauma (e.g., Hodes, Vasquez, Anagnostopoulos, Triantafyllou, Abdelhady, 2018; Panter-Brick, Dajani, Eggerman, Hermosilia, Sancilio, & Ager, 2018). The focus of the present study, instead, addresses the moral development of Syrian adolescent refugees.

Researchers have called for clinical research methods that provide elaborate information about the impact of war on adolescent social development (Barber, 2009; Cairns & Dawes, 1996). Researchers have also recommended methodological alternatives to correlational designs (Hart & Carlo, 2005). To address these recommendations, I employed a variation of the clinical interview originally developed by Piaget (1927/1960) and implemented extensively in research on social domain theory (e.g., Bottema-Beutel, Turiel, DeWitt, & Wolfberg, 2017; Helwig, Hildebrandt, & Turiel, 1995; Laupa & Turiel, 1993; Tisak & Turiel, 1984; Toma & Bhabha, 2013; Turiel & Wainryb, 1998). The clinical interview "guides the child through self-exploration of his [sic] own knowledge" (Damon, 1977, p. 56). In the present study, I employ the clinical interview to investigate how Syrian adolescent refugees conceptualize moral issues involving harm in different social contexts.

Research questions. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Posada & Wainryb, 2008), the first objective of the present study was to determine whether or not Syrian adolescent refugees have developed generalizable moral judgments that bear on welfare. Then, based on their common experiences during the preflight, flight, and resettlement phases of migration, I examined participants' judgments about straightforward and complex situations. To probe the influence of context, reasoning was assessed (a) across baseline, retribution, and survival situations and (b) in Syrian war and Canadian resettlement contexts. The specific research questions for the present study were as follows:

1. How do adolescent refugees from Syria make general judgments about unprovoked transgressions involving harm toward others, and how stable are their judgments when presented in conflict with parental authority, school rules, societal practice, or the law?
2. How do adolescent refugees reason about moral transgressions involving harm in Syrian war and Canadian resettlement contexts across baseline, retribution, and survival situations?
3. How does the moral reasoning of Syrian refugees differ between younger and older adolescents, and between boys and girls?

The purpose of the first research question was to determine whether refugees from war-affected Syria conceptualize welfare as a universal and generalizable moral concept that is not contingent on parental authority, school rules, common practice in society, or the law. In accord with findings from previous studies on war-exposed adolescents, I expected that refugees from Syria would judge harm as wrong and would judge harm as not contingent on parental authority, school rules, or common societal practice. I also expected that participants would agree to having a law that does not permit harm (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008). In previous studies in Western and non-Western countries (e.g., Helwig & Turiel, 2002; Hollos, et al., 1986), adolescents have justified their responses on the basis of appeals to the rights and welfare of others. Similar types of justifications were expected in the

present study across gender and age groups. However, it was expected that older adolescents were more likely than younger adolescents to appeal to concerns of rights and welfare. Conversely, younger adolescents would be more likely to appeal to conventional issues of authority and rules.

With respect to the second research question, I expected varied responses in evaluations of complex situations in war and resettlement contexts involving harm. Previous research on social domain theory has shown that moral judgments weigh more heavily in some situational contexts than in others, and older adolescent refugees were as likely as younger adolescent refugees to negatively evaluate harm. Previous studies of Colombian children exposed to armed conflict found that all or almost all children negatively evaluated harm in baseline and survival conditions and the majority of children negatively evaluated harm in the revenge condition (Posada & Wainryb, 2008). These results lend support to the proposition that a small proportion of participants might view harm as legitimate under exceptional conditions. The added feature of the present study—how responses might vary between a war and resettlement context—was expected to further complicate the findings. I also expected that participants would vary in their justifications in relation to their judgments. Where harm might not be acceptable, reasoning would be based on welfare, justice, equality, and rights, whereas where harm might be acceptable, reasoning would be based on social conventional or personal concerns. According to social domain theory, this variability occurs when moral principles about avoiding harm toward others come into conflict with personal needs for survival or desire for retribution when wronged (Posada & Wainryb, 2008).

With respect to the final research question, findings from previous studies demonstrated that older children and adolescents applied more complex reasoning to moral transgressions than did younger children, leading to more varied responses across situations (e.g., Smetana et al., 1991; Song, Smetana, & Kim, 1987). Similar results were expected in the present study. In provoked situations, I also expected that younger adolescent refugees would be more likely than older adolescent refugees to evaluate harm as acceptable based on parental authority, school rules, or laws of the country. This expectation was based on research of war-exposed internally displaced children and adolescents (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009). Given the complexity of the contextualized conditions, I expected that responses would vary among older adolescents regarding whether or not evaluations of harm should be contingent on parental authority, school rules, or laws of the country.

Method

Participants

Syrian adolescent newcomers who reported being born in Syria and who self-identified as Muslim participated in the study. Previous research identifies newcomers as individuals who have resided in their host country for a maximum of four to six years (Government of Canada, n.d.). Participants reported length of residence in Canada to be between one and three years.

Fifty-nine participants, comprised of 30 young adolescents (ages 12 to 14) and 29 older adolescents (ages 17 to 19) from separate families (i.e., one child per family) were recruited for the study. The sample size provided sufficient statistical power for detecting relationships among variables. The age range of 11 to 19 was consistent with how societies typically define adolescence (Sawyer et al., 2012) and was similar to the definition accepted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2019) and the World Health Organization (2001). In eight instances, ages reported were based on birthdates assigned by migration officials prior to arrival in Canada, due to lack of civil documentation as a result of unregistered births in war zones (UNICEF, 2018). For participants who stated both their actual and assigned birthdates, actual birthdates were used for selection and grouping of participants in the present study. Grouping participants by age (e.g., younger vs. older adolescents) was consistent with previous studies from a domain perspective (e.g., Perkins & Turiel, 2007; Turiel, 1976; Wainryb, 1991), and allowed for a comparison of observable differences in the way adolescents of different ages reason about harm.

Fifty-eight participants reported being born in regions in Syria affected by war. One participant identified Jordan as his place of birth, but returned to Syria with his family when he was 2 years old. Of the 59 participants, 22 reported being born in or close to Damascus, 8 reported being born in Aleppo, 11 reported being born in Daraa, 6 reported being born in Hims (Homs), and 3 reported being born in Idlib. The remaining participants reported being born in cities in which protests or battles have occurred.

Figure 2 illustrates the flight paths of each participant. Participants fled to Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Egypt where they resided until granted admission to Canada. All reported that they arrived in Canada during or after 2015, coinciding with Canada's pledge to resettle 25,000 refugees from Syria by the end of 2016 (Statistics Canada, 2019).

Recruitment

Participants were recruited from a community service agency for refugees located in an urban city in a western Canadian province. The agency was selected based on its reputation for providing local, provincial and national leadership in providing settlement services to immigrants. Participants were referred based on their ability to speak at an intermediate level of conversational English, as determined by informal interviews conducted by an agency staff member fluent in English and Arabic. Permission to conduct the research was requested from a community organization in an initial letter describing the objectives, procedures, and implications of the study. After the president of the agency agreed for the study to be conducted at the agency site, an information session was scheduled to introduce the research to potential

participants and their parents. An agency staff member, fluent in Arabic and English, was present to interpret the information for attendees of the session.

I presented attendees with an overview and informed them of the expected time commitment, monetary incentive, procedure, implications, and that participation would be voluntary. Parent permission, participant consent, and assent forms were distributed and reviewed during the session. Participants who were unable to attend the recruitment session due to mobility restrictions were informed of the study via phone. Participants reviewed consent forms with me prior to their participation. Particular emphasis was placed on the participants' rights to confidentiality and withdrawal from the study, given the sensitivity of groups who may have witnessed or experienced human rights violations. Consent and assent forms stated assurances of confidentiality, permission for withdrawal from the study at any time, and that interview data would be accessible only to the co-investigator and principal investigator.

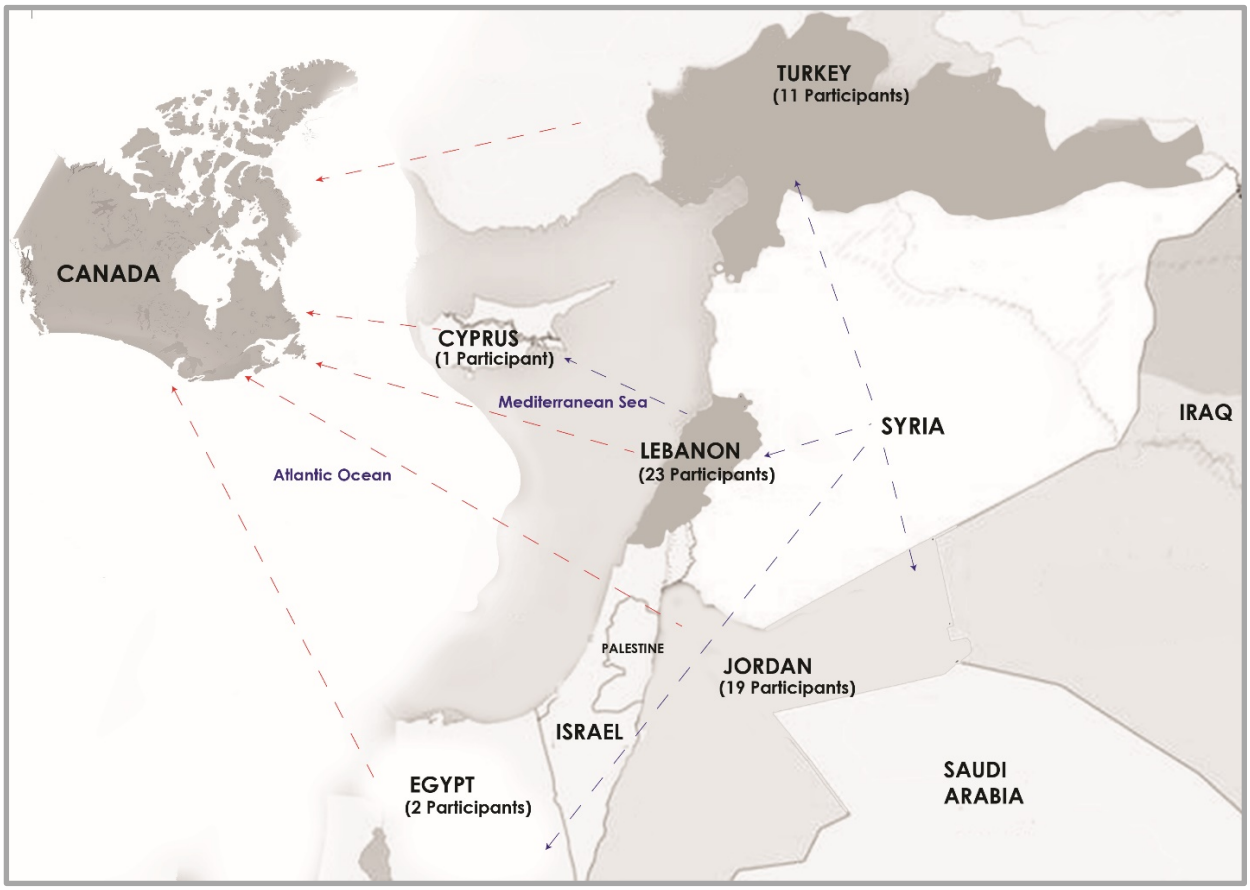

Figure 2. Migration routes of study participants

Assessments

For this study, I employed a variation of the clinical interview method, derived originally from the clinical method of Piaget (1927/1960). The specific objective was to uncover information on how adolescent refugees from Syria evaluated harm in different situations and justified their evaluations. Participants were presented with hypothetical stories about harm and a systematic set of probing questions for each story. The gender of the protagonist in the stories corresponded to the gender of the participant.

Hypothetical stories were created from information consolidated from research literature, news reports, refugee service providers, and refugees themselves. My first step in story creation involved information gathering from research articles and news reports describing preflight, flight, and resettlement experiences. My next step was to access additional information about preflight, flight, and resettlement from administrators at an alternative high school that provided education for newcomer students. Newcomer students between the ages of 16 and 21 from Afghanistan, Yemen, and Syria were invited to participate in pilot testing sessions at the high school. Permission for student consultation and pilot interviews was requested from the administrator. Parents of the students were informed of the activity and its purpose. Students were informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the session if they experienced discomfort during the course of the consultation or pilot interview. My final step was to use the participant feedback to edit the stories and translate them into Arabic.

The assessments included two components that have been commonly employed in research based on domain theory (e.g., Ardila-Rey et al., 2008; Gingo, Roded, & Turiel, 2017): (a) General assessments composed of straightforward questions about the infliction of harm in an unprovoked situation, and (b) contextualized assessments composed of six hypothetical stories—three describing an event involving harm in a war context in Syria and three corresponding stories involving harm in the resettlement context of Canada. Stories described situations bearing on retribution and survival that are common during preflight, flight, and resettlement.

The interviews occurred at the immigrant services agency—a familiar setting for the participants, where they and their families regularly accessed resources to support their resettlement. Interviews took place in a quiet and private room, and were tape recorded and transcribed. Prior to the interview, I reviewed the assent form with prospective participants, and those who volunteered to participate proceeded with the interview. To confirm that participants met the selection criteria, they were asked to restate for the interviewer their birthdate, religion, date they fled Syria, country to which they fled, and date of arrival in Canada. Interviews were conducted in English. However, to ensure story comprehension, participants were provided with a written version of the story in Arabic and English for reference during the interview. Participants were required to respond in English, but were permitted to include Arabic terms and phrases if the English translation was inaccurate.

After demographic information was collected, the general assessment was conducted followed by the contextualized assessment. Consistent with previous studies, the order of the stories was counterbalanced across participants (Gingo et al., 2017; Wainryb et al., 2005; Weston & Turiel, 1980). Participants were randomly assigned to one of 4 groups representing order of presentation. Groups 1 (15 participants) and 3 (16 participants) were administered the war

baseline stories first, whereas Groups 2 (14 participants) and 4 (14 participants) were administered the resettlement baseline stories first. Following the baseline stories, half of the participants received the survival stories first and the remaining half of the participants received the retribution stories first. The duration of each interview session was approximately 45 minutes. Preliminary analysis indicated no story order effects. Upon completion of the interview, the participants were asked if they had any questions, and were given a letter thanking them for their participation with $40 as compensation. This amount was negotiated with the president of the agency, taking into account the minimum wage per hour in the province plus additional travel time and expenses.

General Assessments. Participants were asked to make judgments about the acceptability of inflicting physical harm (i.e., hitting), whether their judgments were contingent on parent authority, school rules, or common practice, and whether their judgments should be generalizable. For each question, they were asked to provide reasons (justifications) for their judgments (why or why not?). To ascertain how participants evaluate harm, participants were first asked, *Is it all right or not all right for someone to hit another person? Why or why not?* To ascertain whether participants judge the act of hitting to be contingent on parent authority, school rules, or common practice, participants were asked:

> *Would it be all right or not all right to hit another person if your parents allow it? Why or why not? If there were no rules in your school against hitting others, would it be all right or not all right to hit others? Why or why not? In a country where it is common practice to hit others, would it be all right or not all right to hit another person? Why or why not?*

The issue concerning common practice was important given the regular exposure to acts of harm in the context of war. To ascertain whether participants judged the act of hitting as a moral transgression that is generalizable across societies, participants were asked, *Do you think there should be a law in all countries against hitting others? Why or why not?*

Contextualized Assessments. After administration of the general assessment, participants' moral judgments about inflicting physical harm were assessed in six contextualized situations: two baseline conditions, two survival conditions, and two retribution conditions. In the baseline conditions, moral concerns did not conflict with personal or conventional concerns, whereas in the remainder of the conditions, moral issues conflicted with concerns for either retribution or survival. Each condition included one story that took place in the Syrian war context (preflight or flight) and another that took place in the Canadian resettlement context. For each story, participants were first asked to make a judgment about the moral transgression. Participants were then asked for the justifications for their responses. Table 1 illustrates how the stories compared.

Table 1

Comparison Matrix of Contextualized Conditions

Conditions	Syria (War)	Canada (Resettlement)
Baseline (unprovoked)	Aseef and his family live in Syria, where there is a war between groups. One day, Aseef sees a boy his age from the other group cross the street. Aseef hits the boy.	Hakeem and his family came to Canada as refugees. They have come from Syria where there was a war. One day, he sees a Canadian boy his age walk by him. Hakeem hits the boy.
Retribution (provoked)	Fareed and his family live in Syria where there is a war between two groups. One day, while walking to the market, Fareed sees a boy his age from the other tribe. That boy hit Fareed's brother yesterday. Farid hits the boy.	Azeez and his family fled Syria where there was a war, and now they live in Canada as refugees. One day, while on the basketball court, Azeez sees a Canadian boy his age. That boy hit Azeez's brother yesterday. Azeez hits the boy.
Survival (provoked)	Kareem is fleeing Syria because of the war. A bus is driving children out of the city to a refugee camp. Kareem and another boy run to the bus. The driver stops, but has room for only one more person. Kareem hits the other boy and goes into the bus.	Sameer is a refugee from Syria. He lives in a small town in Canada. There is a forest fire warning, so he must leave. A school bus drives people in his neighborhood out of town. Sameer and another boy wait for the bus. The bus arrives, but it is overcrowded. Only one more person can fit. The fire is spreading quickly. Sameer hits the other boy and goes into the bus.

Following each of the stories, participants were asked how they evaluate harm and provide a justification for their answer (i.e., *Is it all right or not all right for [X] to hit the other boy? Why or why not?*) To determine whether or not participant responses for each of the stories in each of the conditions were contingent on parental authority, rules, or laws in the country, participants were presented with contingency probes (e.g., *Suppose [X]'s parents told him it is all right to hit…*) and then asked to provide a criterion judgment. Consistent with the clinical interview method, the type of contingency probe depended on the participants' initial evaluation of the protagonist's actions in each of the stories (Turiel, 1983). Table 2 illustrates how the contingency probes were selected. For each contingency probe, participants were asked, *Would it then be all right or not all right for [X] to hit the boy? Why or why not?*

Table 2

Comparison Matrix of Criterion Judgments

Criterion Response	Syria (War)	Canada (Resettlement)
Baseline Not all right	Suppose Aseef's parents/school rules/law in Syria state that it is not all right to hit someone if they are from a group that is at war with us.	Suppose Hakeem's parents/ school rules/law in Canada state that it is not all right to hit someone if they are from another country.
Baseline All right	Suppose Aseef's parents/school rules, or law in Syria state that it is all right to hit someone even if they are from a group that it is at war with us.	Suppose Hakeem's parents/ school rules/law in Canada state that it is all right to hit someone if they are from another country.
Retribution Not all right	Suppose Fareed's parents/school rules/law in Syria state that it is not all right to hit someone even if the person hurt your family.	Suppose Azeez's parents/ school rules/law in Canada state that it is not all right to hit someone, even if the person hurt your family.
Retribution All right	Suppose Fareed's parents/school rules/law in Syria state that it is all right to hit someone if the person has hurt your family.	Suppose Azeez's parents/ school rules/law in Canada state that it is all right to hit someone if the person hurt your family.
Survival Not all right	Suppose Kareem's parents/ school rules/law in Syria state that it is not all right to hit someone, even to flee the war.	Suppose Sameer's parents/ school rules/law in Canada state that it is not all right to hit someone, even to escape the forest fire.
Survival All right	Suppose Kareem's parents/ school rules/law in Syria state that it is all right to hit someone, to flee the war.	Suppose Sameer's parents/ school rules/law in Canada state that it is all right to hit someone to escape the forest fire.

Coding

Coding of responses to interview questions was based on a reliable coding scheme from previous studies (e.g., Turiel, 1983; Turiel, Hildebrandt, & Wainryb, 1991) and adapted for the present study. Three components of the responses were coded: evaluations of straightforward acts of hitting, criterion judgments aimed at determining the stability of participants' evaluations (whether or not evaluations were contingent on parental authority, school rules, or law), and justifications based on the categories derived from social domain theory. Evaluations and criterion judgments were coded as positive (the act is *all right or acceptable*), negative (the act is *not all right or unacceptable*), or mixed (*depends*). For the purpose of statistical analyses, positive and mixed responses were collapsed into a single category to distinguish between responses that were negative and not negative (i.e., positive or mixed).

Justifications were coded in accordance with previous reliable scoring systems of justification categories derived from social domain theory (Turiel et al., 1991). The coding system was modified and finalized through an iterative process based on participant responses in the present study. Consistent with previous research (Tisak & Turiel, 1984), a binomial classification was used in coding each of the justification categories. An affirmative response was coded whenever a justification was used and a negative response was coded whenever a justification was not used. The frequency was, therefore, represented by the total number of affirmative and negative responses. For statistical analyses, a binomial classification was used to code justifications as moral or non-moral.

Reliability

To establish inter-coder reliability, 15 interviews (25%) were randomly selected and recoded by an additional coder. The second coder was trained on the research design and the coding categories. The second coder understood Arabic and was experienced in coding mixed methods research. Percent agreement for moral, conventional, and personal domains were 86.9%, 73.2%, and 66.7%, respectively. Interrater agreement was assessed using Cohen's kappa. For the general assessment, interrater agreement was found to be high for evaluations of harm and criterion judgments ($k = 1.0$) as well as for justifications ($k = .93$). For the situational contexts, interrater agreement was found to be high for evaluations of harm and criterion judgments ($k = .96$) and moderate for justifications ($k = .83$).

The final version of the coding scheme was derived after all 59 interviews had been coded and modified based on inconsistencies, errors, and interrater discrepancies. Codes with an overall frequency of less than 5% were discarded if they did not serve a theoretical purpose. Codes that did not exhibit inter-rater reliability were reviewed and (a) combined to form a new category, (b) entered into an existing category, or (c) deemed uncodable. Justification categories were organized by domain—moral, conventional, and personal—and two new categories labeled *prosocial* and *retaliation* were formed. The remaining justifications were deemed uncodable and, therefore, discarded from further analyses. The final set of codes is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Categories and Descriptions of Final Justification Scheme

Category	Description
Moral	
Welfare: Physical/Psychological	Hitting will compromise the physical or psychological safety of others or society at large. The justification may include feelings that indicate care and concern for the victim. Hitting must be avoided to prevent repeated or escalating harm or violence, or to cultivate the moral good.
Non-Welfare: Justice/Fairness/Rights/ Equality/Respect/Reciprocity	Unprovoked hitting is wrong and unjust. All human beings have the right to equal treatment and have equal status. The reciprocal exchange of respect is required by virtue of being human.
Categorically Wrong	Hitting is described as bad, wrong, or not good, without elaboration.
Conventional	
Authority	Hitting is justified or not justified on the basis of permissibility or punishment by the authority.
Rules	Hitting is justified or not justified based on whether school rules or the law permits.
Personal	
Individual choice	Hitting is justified or not justified based on personal preference.
Prudential	Concerns focus on the social or physical consequences to the protagonist.
Additional Categories	
Prosocial	Interpersonal relationships or group image will be affected.
Retaliation	Payback, revenge, or punishment by the protagonist is warranted.

Justifications were coded using a binary coding system with 1 meaning the justification was used and 0 meaning the justification was not used. When participants provided more than one justification, the justification carrying more weight in the response was selected. For example, "[Hitting] starts with one guy and it ends with the big group. I think this will end up in jail. We had first World War I and World War II, so we don't want any more wars." In this case, the welfare justification was assigned to the response, given the emphasis on concerns about the escalation of violence. When participants provided two equally weighted justifications, both justifications were selected. Equally weighted responses were most often provided with mixed evaluations. For example, the following response combined prudential and welfare justifications: "All right [to hit] because Sameer, if he [doesn't] go in the bus, he will be dead because the fire is coming. Not all right because if he fights the boy, Sameer going into the bus and the boy is now in the fire."

Results

Via a mixed-methods approach, evaluations, criterion judgments, and justifications were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 25 (SPSS; IBM, 2017) and nVivo version 11 (QSR International, 2017), as well as Social Science Statistics (2019), which is an online collection of statistical tools that have been audited for accuracy against SPSS output. Analyses involved a combination of chi-square tests of independence, z tests, and binomial regressions. Chi-square tests were used to determine whether or not there was a significant relationship between evaluations of harm and gender and age. Z-tests were performed to determine how subjects responded under the different conditions (war, resettlement, baseline, retribution, and survival). Unlike ANOVAs, z-tests are robust to the violation of independence and are performed when the data are paired or matched. Binomial regressions were conducted to determine the probability of providing a particular type of justification based on the type of evaluation of harm. The Bonferroni-Holm and Benjamini-Hochberg correction procedures were used to counteract the problem of Type 1 errors, which occur if multiple statistical tests are administered on the same data set. Results in this chapter reported to be significant are based on these correction procedures.

General Assessments

Evaluations of harm. Table 4 presents the percentages of participants' evaluations of unprovoked hitting for the general question and follow-up contingency probes. Overall, 100% of participants evaluated harm as unacceptable when asked, *Is it all right or not all right to hit another person?* Results of follow-up questions to determine whether evaluations were contingent on parental authority, school rules, and common practice, showed that the larger majority judged harm as still wrong. Only 5.1%, 10.2% and 17.0% of participants shifted to either a positive or mixed evaluation based on parental approval, school approval, or common practice, respectively. Results of Pearson chi-square tests to determine gender and age group differences in criterion judgments (parental authority, school rules, or common practice) yielded no statistically significant differences.

To determine if shifts in evaluation between the general question and criterion judgments were statistically significant, two-sample z tests were conducted. With the Bonferroni-Holm correction, results indicated that a statistically significant shift in evaluations of harm occurred between the general question and common practice criterion judgment ($z = 3.31$; $p = < .01$). When asked if there should be a law in all countries against hitting, 56 of the 59 participants (94.9%) gave positive responses. No story order effects were found.

Table 4

Number of Participants Evaluations of Unprovoked Hitting by Gender and Age

Response	Boys	Girls	Younger	Older	Total
		General			
All right	0 *(0%)*	0 *(0%)*	0 *(0%)*	0 *(0%)*	0 *(0%)*
Not All right	30 *(100.0%)*	29 *(100.0%)*	30 *(100.0%)*	29 *(100.0%)*	59 *(100.0%)*
Mixed	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*
		Parent			
All right	1 *(3.3%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	1 *(3.3%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	1 *(1.7%)*
Not All right	27 *(90.0%)*	29 *(100.0%)*	28 *(86.2%)*	28 *(96.6%)*	56 *(94.9%)*
Mixed	2 *(6.7%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	1 *(3.3%)*	1 *(3.4%)*	2 *(3.4%)*
		School Rules			
All right	*1 (3.3%)*	*2 (6.9%)*	*1 (3.3%)*	*2 (6.9%)*	*3 (5.1%)*
Not All right	28 *(93.3%)*	25 *(96.4%)*	27 *(90.0%)*	26 *(89.7%)*	53 *(89.8%)*
Mixed	1 *(3.3%)*	2 *(6.9%)*	2 *(6.7%)*	1 *(3.4%)*	3 *(5.1%)*
		Common Practice			
All right	3 *(10.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	2 *(1.7%)*	1 *(3.4%)*	3 *(5.1%)*
Not All right	23 *(76.7%)*	26 *(89.7%)*	24 *(80.0%)*	25 *(100%)*	49 *(83.1%)*
Mixed	4 *(13.3%)*	3 *(10.3%)*	4 *(13.3%)*	3 *(10.3%)*	7 *(11.9%)*

Justifications. Table 5 presents the number and percentage of justifications used for the general question and criterion judgments. Descriptive statistics illustrate a difference between the proportional use of justifications. More participants provided a moral justification than a non-moral justification (conventional, personal, prosocial or retaliation) to reason about their evaluations of harm. The most common moral justification was welfare. No gender or age differences emerged in a chi-square test comparing the proportional use of justifications.

The type of justification was expected to reflect the type of evaluation (positive or negative) for each of the criterion judgments. To test this assumption, chi-square tests were administered to determine whether or not participants were more likely to provide moral justifications for negative evaluations of harm and non-moral justifications for positive evaluations of harm. Given the low expected frequency due to small sample size, a Fisher's exact test was conducted. A Fisher's exact test is a conservative test that is recommended when

one or more expected frequencies are low (Kim, 2017; Williams & Quave, 2019). For the law criterion judgment (*Should there be a law in all countries against hitting?*), participants were more likely to select a moral justification for a positive response and a non-moral justification for a negative response ($\chi^2 = 14.81$; $p < .01$), yielding a medium effect size ($V = .51$).

For the common practice criterion judgment—*In a country where it is common practice to hit others, would it be all right or not all right to hit another person*—participants were more likely to select an authority rule justification for a positive evaluation and an alternative justification for a negative evaluation ($\chi^2 = 20.06$; $p < .01$), yielding a medium effect size ($V = .59$). For parental authority and school rules criterion judgments (*Is it all right to hit another person if your parents/school rules allow it?*), results of chi-square tests yielded no statistically significant differences in the type of justification between those who provided positive and those who provided negative evaluations.

Table 5

Number of Participants Justifications for Evaluations of Harm

Justification Type	General	Parental Authority	School Rules	Common Practice	Law
		Moral			
Justice/Equality	16 (28.6%)	14 (24.1%)	9 (15.3%)	8 (12.7%)	6 (10.5%)
Welfare	29 (51.8%)	24 (41.4%)	35 (59.3%)	35 (55.5%)	45 (78.9%)
Categorically Wrong	1 (1.8%)	2 (3.4%)	1 (1.7%)	2 (3.2%)	1 (1.7%)
Total	46 (82.1%)	40 (69.0.%)	45 (76.3%)	45 (71.4%)	52 (91.2%)
		Conventional			
Social	1 (1.8%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (1.7%)	3 (4.7%)	1 (1.8%)
Authority-Rules	7 (12.5%)	7 (12.1%)	6 (10.2%)	6 (9.5%)	1 (1.8%)
Total	8 (14.0%)	8 (14.5%)	7 (12.1%)	9 (15.8%)	2 (3.5%)
		Personal			
Choice	0 (0.0%)	6 (10.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.2%)	2 (3.5%)
Prudential	4 (7.1%)	4 (6.9%)	7 (12.1%)	7 (11.1%)	1 (1.7%)
Total	3 (3.4%)	10 (18.2%)	7 (12.0%)	9 (15.8%)	3 (5.3%)
		Retaliation			
	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.7%)	2 (3.2%)	0 (0.0%)

Contextualized Assessments

Evaluations of harm by situational context. Table 6 presents descriptive statistics of participant evaluations of harm for each situation (baseline, retribution, and survival) and context (Syrian war and Canadian resettlement). Overall, results indicated that the majority of participants negatively evaluated harm in each situational context. However, more participants provided a mixed response in the retribution situations than in the baseline or survival situations. Furthermore, more participants evaluated harm as unacceptable in the baseline and survival situations than in the retribution situations.

To determine if differences in proportions were statistically significant, a z-test for two population proportions was administered. Results of z-tests showed that participants evaluated harm as significantly less acceptable in the Canadian resettlement context than in the Syrian war context (z statistic = 2.38; $p = .02$). To probe further, z-tests were conducted to determine which situation—baseline or retribution—produced these significant differences between resettlement and war contexts. Results indicated that harm in the retribution situation was less acceptable in the resettlement context than in the war context (z statistic = 2.45; $p = .01$). No significant difference emerged between resettlement and war contexts in the baseline conditions (z statistic = 1.74; $p = .08$).

Another set of z-tests was performed to compare evaluations of harm in baseline conditions to retribution and survival conditions. Results indicated a significant difference between baseline and retribution conditions (z = 5.62; $p < .01$), but no significant difference between baseline and survival conditions (z = 1.57; $p = .12$). A significant difference between retribution and survival conditions also emerged (z = 4.43; $p < .001$). The proportion of negative evaluations of harm was significantly higher in the survival conditions than in the retribution conditions. In sum, results indicated that participants evaluated harm as significantly less acceptable in baseline and survival resettlement contexts than in the retribution resettlement context. Furthermore, participants evaluated harm as equally unacceptable in war and resettlement retribution situations. In addition, the retribution conditions elicited more mixed responses than either baseline (z = 2.93; $p < .001$) or survival conditions (z = 2.43; $p = .02$).

Table 6

Evaluations of Harm by Context as Percentages Based on n = 58 (frequencies in parentheses)

	All right		*Not All right*		*Mixed*	
Context	*War*	*Resettlement*	*War*	*Resettlement*	*War*	*Resettlement*
Baseline	5.1%	0%	94.9%	100%	0%	0%
	(3)	(0)	(56)	(58)	(0)	(0)
Retribution	32.8%	12.1%	60.3%	81.0%	6.9%	6.9%
	(19)	(7)	(35)	(47)	(4)	(4)
Survival	6.9%	5.2%	93.1%	93.1%	0%	1.7%
	(4)	(3)	(54)	(54)	(0)	(1)

Note. $N = 59$.

Evaluations of harm by gender and age. Table 7 presents the percentages of participants' evaluations of harm for each situational context by gender. The table shows no gender difference in evaluations of harm in the baseline resettlement condition and almost no gender difference in evaluations of harm in the baseline war condition. The gender distribution for retribution and survival conditions was examined via chi-square tests. Given the small sample size, mixed responses were combined with positive evaluations of harm because mixed responses were indicative of the participant's positive evaluation under certain circumstances. Given the low expected frequency due to small sample size, a Fisher's exact test was conducted. Results showed that gender differences for retribution and survival situations were not statistically significant.

Table 7

Number of Participants Evaluations of Hitting for Each Story by Gender

	War		Resettlement	
Response	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
		Baseline		
All right	3 *(10.0%)*	0 *(0%)*	0 *(0%)*	0 *(0%)*
Not All right	27 *(90.0%)*	29 *(100.0%)*	30 *(100.0%)*	28 *(100.0%)*
Mixed	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*
		Retribution		
All right	11 *(36.7%)*	8 *(28.6%)*	5 *(16.7%)*	2 *(7.1%)*
Not All right	19 *(63.3%)*	16 *(57.1%)*	22 *(73.3%)*	25 *(89.3%)*
Mixed	0 *(0.0%)*	4 *(14.3%)*	3 *(10.0%)*	1 *(3.6%)*
		Survival		
All right	*4 (13.8%)*	*0 (0.0%)*	3 *1(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*
Not All right	25 *(86.2 %)*	29 *(100.0%)*	26 *(86.7%)*	28 *(100.0%)*
Mixed	0 *(3.3%)*	0 *(3.3%)*	1 *(3.3%)*	0 *(0.0%)*

The distribution of evaluations by age is presented in Table 8. The table shows no or just about no age group differences in evaluations of harm in baseline or survival conditions, and just about no age group differences in the retribution war condition. The table shows that more younger than older adolescents provided negative evaluations of harm in the retribution resettlement condition; however, this difference was not statistically significant. A notable finding in the retribution conditions was that more older than younger adolescents provided mixed responses. To determine if differences in proportions were statistically significant, a z-test for two population proportions was administered. Results showed that older adolescents were significantly more likely than younger adolescents to provide a mixed evaluation ($z = 2.65$; $p = .01$).

Table 8

Number of Participants Evaluations of Hitting for Each Story by Age

	War		Resettlement	
Response	Younger	Older	Younger	Older
		Baseline		
All right	2 *(6.7%)*	1 *(3.4%)*	0 *(0%)*	0 *(0%)*
Not All right	28 *(93.3%)*	28 *(96.6%%)*	30 *(100.0%)*	28 *(100.0%)*
Mixed	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	0 *(0.0%)*
		Retribution		
All right	11 *(37.9%)*	8 *(27.6%)*	5 *(16.7%)*	2 *(7.1%)*
Not All right	17 *(58.6%)*	18 *(62.1%)*	25 *(83.3%)*	22 *(78.6%)*
Mixed	1 *(3.4%)*	3 *(10.3%)*	0 *(3.3%)*	4 *(14.3%)*
		Survival		
All right	*2 (6.9%)*	*2 (6.9%)*	2 *(6.7%)*	1 *(3.6%)*
Not All right	27 *(93.1%)*	27 *(93.1%)*	28 *(93.3%)*	26 *(92.9%)*
Mixed	0 *(3.3%)*	0 *(6.9%)*	0 *(0.0%)*	1 *(3.6%)*

Criterion judgments of harm. A follow-up research question was whether or not judgments about the acceptability of harm would be stable, meaning not contingent on parental authority, school rules, or law. To answer this question, I conducted an analysis of whether or not participants altered their evaluations when in conflict with parental authority, school rules, or law. Although the majority of participants (76.8%) did not alter their evaluations, a sizable proportion (23.2%) did alter their evaluations to comply with parental authority, school rules, or law. The next step was to compare the proportion of participants who altered their evaluations from positive to negative and vice versa. Of those who altered their evaluations, 85.5% shifted toward negative evaluations, whereas the remaining participants shifted toward positive evaluations. In other words, parental authority, school rules and the law were more likely to influence participants toward negative evaluations of harm than toward positive evaluations of harm. Given that the majority of criterion judgments overall were negative (86.7%), a follow-up z-test comparing evaluations of harm to criterion judgments of harm revealed no statistically significant difference ($z = .08$; $p = .94$). Results of follow-up chi-square tests showed no gender or age group differences between those who did and those who did not alter their evaluations.

Justifications. The proportional use of justifications was examined for evaluations of harm in each of the conditions. Table 9 presents the number and percentage use of each

justification. Overall, Table 9 shows greater use of moral justifications than other types of justifications for each condition.

Further analysis of Table 9 revealed a disproportionately higher use of authority/rule justifications in the Canadian resettlement conditions than in the Syrian war conditions. To test the statistical significance of these differences, a *z*-test comparing two proportions was administered for each of the three conditions (baseline, retribution, and survival). Taking into account the Benjamini-Hochberg correction, results showed a statistically significant difference for the baseline condition ($z = 3.42$, $p < .001$) and retribution conditions ($z = 2.60$, $p < .01$). Results did not produce a statistically significant difference for the survival condition ($z = .02$, $p = .98$).

Table 9

Raw Counts of Justifications in Situational Contexts (Percentages in parentheses)

Justification	Baseline war	Baseline resettlement	Retribution war	Retribution resettlement	Survival war	Survival resettlement
			Moral			
Justice/Equality	83 (34.7%)	116 (47.9%)	21 (8.8%)	24 (10.1%)	23 (10.0%)	29 (12.3%)
Welfare	102 (42.7%)	65 (26.9%)	129 (54.2%)	105 (44.1%)	154(67.0%)	157 (66.6%)
Categorically Wrong	4 (1.7%)	1 (0.4%)	6 (2.5%)	5 (2.1%)	7 (3.0%)	3 (1.3%)
Total	189 (79.1%)	182 (75.2%)	156 (65.5%)	134 (56.3%)	184 (80.0%)	189 (80.1%)
			Conventional			
Authority/Rules	22 (9.2%)	49 (20.2%)	42 (17.6%)	65 (27.3%)	16 (4.9%)	19 (8.1%)
			Personal			
Choice	8 (3.3%)	1 (0.4%)	6 (2.5%)	5 (2.1%)	2 (0.9%)	3 (1.3%)
Prudential	14 (5.9%)	10 (4.1%)	14 (5.8%)	14 (5.9%)	27 (11.7%)	25 (10.6%)
Total	22 (2.6%)	11 (4.5%)	20 (8.4%)	19 (8.0%)	29 (18.0%)	28 (11.9%)
			Prosocial			
	4 (1.7%)	8 (3.3%)	2 (0.8%)	7 (2.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.4%)
			Retaliation			
	6 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	20 (8.4%)	20 (8.4%)	1 (0.4%)	0 (0.0%)

Statistical analyses for justifications were limited given the small sample size and limited representation of non-moral justification categories. To address the issue of underrepresentation, the conventional, personal, prosocial, and retaliation justifications were collapsed to create a new variable labeled *non-moral* justifications. Further statistical analyses were conducted using this collapsed binomial category.

An important question to address was the extent to which evaluations of harm predicted the type of justification selected. This question was answered using a binary logistical regression analysis. Unlike the chi-square test, the binary logistical regression takes into account the potential influence of other explanatory variables and controls for these influences. The logistical regression leads to an outcome which illustrates the probability of selecting one of two types of justifications (moral or non-moral) based on the type of evaluation (positive or negative). Two models were of interest: Model 1 predictors were gender and age, and the Model 2 predictor was evaluation of harm. The objective of the regression was to determine if Model 2 would result in a significant improvement in fit over Model 1. Results are presented in Table 10.

Gender was not a significant predictor for type of justification (moral vs. non-moral) in any of the six situational contexts. However, age group was a significant predictor for the retribution situation in the resettlement context. Younger adolescents were as likely to select a moral justification (n = 14) as they were a non-moral justification (n = 14). However, older adolescents were significantly more likely to select a moral justification (n = 20) than a non-moral justification (n = 5). The effect size of the association between age group and type of moral justification was found to be moderate (Cramer's V = .31).

As shown in Table 10, Wald chi-square tests showed a significant increase in use of a moral (vs. non-moral) justification for a negative evaluation of harm. This finding reached statistical significance in retribution and survival situations in the war context. Situations in the resettlement context did not produce significant results. In other words, in the resettlement context, the type of evaluation (positive or negative) did not predict whether participants were likely to select a moral justification.

Table 10

Logistical Regression of Predictors of Justification Type

Predictors by Context	*B*	*SE*	*Wald* χ^2	*p*	*OR*
		Resettlement Baseline			
Gender	.09	.61	.02	.89	1.09
Age Group	.09	.61	.02	.89	1.09
Evaluation of Harm	-	-	-	-	-
		Resettlement Retribution			
Gender	-.01	.62	.00	.99	1.01
Age Group	-1.4	.63	4.9	.027	.25
Evaluation of Harm	-.30	.78	.15	.70	.74
		Resettlement Survival			
Gender	-.19	.78	.06	.81	.82
Age Group	-1.01	.78	1.67	.20	.36
Evaluation of Harm	-1.66	1.18	1.98	.16	.19
		War Baseline			
Gender	-18.50	6534.41	.00	.10	.00
Age Group	-35.36	8217.50	.00	.10	.00
Evaluation of Harm	-19.70	5700.87	.00	.10	.00
		War Retribution			
Gender	-.90	.77	1.36	.24	.41
Age Group	.01	.75	.00	.99	1.01
Evaluation of Harm	-2.73	.87	9.81	.00**	.07
		War Survival			
Gender	-.86	.57	2.30	.13	.42
Age Group	-.76	.55	1.90	.17	.47
Evaluation of Harm	-2.45	.91	7.22	.00**	.09

**$p < .01$

Discussion

> "Every person is scared [for] his self. He'd be like, "I don't want to die." But that's not right. But myself is above anything, I want to live—I want the life. But that's not all right. Just let him think about another person, maybe we'll get out but if you hit the person and throw him away, the fire will come and burn him. Think about others, don't think about yourself." (17-year-old boy)

> "It wouldn't be fair because if someone hits your family—someone in your family, you wouldn't like that and if you hit someone's family, that Canadian girl would say, 'It's not fair.'" (12-year-old girl)

> "We have a war in our country and if she will be a nice person, the war in our country will finish. But if the people still hating each other and saying bad words about each other and say you are from a different religion, the war will never stop." (17-year-old girl)

> "It doesn't matter where you are and who you are…because I just feel other people are equal. How would you feel [if] nobody else helps you? How would you feel? You will feel terrible and that's [what] all the people feel too. You have emotions, all people do, we're all equal." (17-year-old boy)

Early theoretical perspectives on moral development in the context of political violence have produced compelling narratives of children described as *morally truncated* (Fields, 1979) and *morally disengaged* (Bandura, 1986). The burgeoning view was that a moral atmosphere of armed conflict diminishes moral reasoning, and that adolescents are particularly affected psychologically (Barber & Schluterman, 2009). The present study, however, yielded contradictory results. Two major findings support the first hypothesis that adolescent newcomer refugees exposed to war would generalize harm as wrong and unalterable by parental authority, school rules, or common societal practice. First, all participants provided negative evaluations of harm when presented with the general question, *Is it alright or not alright to hit another person?* Moreover, almost all participants stated there should be a law against hitting. Second, the majority of participants' criterion judgments remained stable across each of the criterion dimensions. In other words, the judgment that an act of harm is wrong was not contingent on parental authority, school rules, or common societal practice (conventional criteria). Consider the following example:

> "We all the same. It doesn't matter who you are, from where you are. We still all the same. We are human…. [If] it says in school you should hit this guy, but you as a person you shouldn't be doing this because you're both human, and you both are the same." (17-year-old boy)

In this example, the act of hitting is judged as wrong because everyone is of equal status. Even if permissible by school rules, hitting is wrong and, therefore, is a social issue that falls within the moral domain. This example illustrates the theoretical assumption that children construct boundaries that distinguish the moral domain from the conventional domain, and reason accordingly (Turiel, 1983).

Although the majority of participants' judgments were stable and not contingent on parental authority, school rules, or the law, a small minority did alter their evaluations to be compliant with parent sanctions, school rules, or the law. However, participants were more likely to shift their positive evaluations toward negative evaluations of harm, rather than vice versa. This finding suggests that those adolescents who initially provided positive evaluations of harm recognized that harm is a moral transgression when their evaluations were in conflict with parental authority, school rules, or the law and were, therefore, open to altering their judgments. In other words, adolescent refugees are more likely to obey rules or laws that prohibit harm than to obey rules and laws that permit harm. This finding provides further evidence contradicting earlier findings that war exposure precipitates "moral disengagement" or "moral truncation."

Regarding the second hypothesis, all of the participants stated that harm was wrong in the unprovoked resettlement contexts. Almost all participants stated that harm was wrong in the unprovoked war context and in the survival war and resettlement situational contexts. Furthermore, the majority of participants stated that harm for the purpose of retribution was wrong. This finding was stable across Syrian war and Canadian resettlement contexts. Taken together, the findings illustrate that, for Syrian Muslim adolescent refugees exposed to war, harm is viewed as a universal moral issue—unalterable by rules, authority, law, or social consensus, and generalizable to Western, non-Western, war, and resettlement contexts.

Overview of Findings: Complexities and Nuances

The divergent findings between present and past research on the moral development of war-exposed children and adolescents is due to differences in theoretical orientations and methodological approaches. Findings from early studies, based on Kohlberg's (1973) stage theory, were derived from global assessments of moral reasoning showing that individuals use one form of reasoning at a time, and the form of reasoning used corresponds to the individual's moral stage of development. However, present findings based on social domain theory (Turiel, 1983), were derived from general and contextualized assessments that captured the complexity of social reasoning within individuals and the heterogeneity of reasoning across individuals.

The varied use of justification categories provided evidence of the forms and complexity of social reasoning. In previous studies conducted in Western and non-Western countries (e.g., Helwig & Turiel, 2002; Hollos et al., 1986), adolescents have justified negative evaluations of harm on the basis of moral considerations and have justified positive evaluations on the basis of nonmoral considerations. Similar trends were expected and derived in the present study. Furthermore, within the moral domain, use of the welfare justification was disproportionately higher than the use of non-welfare justifications. Earlier research has produced a similar pattern of results (Davidson et al., 1983). In the present study, this trend was evident in the survival and retribution situations in both the Syrian war and Canadian resettlement contexts, as well as the baseline Syrian war context, i.e., the welfare justification was selected more frequently than the justice/equality justification. However, the baseline Canadian context elicited the justice/equality justification more frequently than the welfare justification.

Consider the following equality justification in the unprovoked resettlement context in response to the probe, *Suppose Hakeem's parents told him it is all right to hit someone if they are from a different country. Would it be all right or not alright for Hakeem to hit the boy*:

> Not all right. Hakeem have bad parents I'm telling you. The question is why did they come to another country? Why didn't they just stay in their country and just hurt the people they want? Why would you [go] to other countries that are more peaceful where there [is] no war? Why would you hurt other people? There's no different—it does not matter which country you're from, wherever you are from, space, ground it does not matter. As long as you are human, you are human, should be equal. There's no one above the other. All humans are equal. (17-year-old boy)

The participant's response illustrates the theoretical underpinning that informational assumptions vary according to the features of the situation. Features of an unprovoked situation in a "peaceful" context are distinct from other situations and, therefore, evoke specific forms of reasoning—in this case, issues about equality. Why equality is a more salient moral consideration than welfare in the Canadian resettlement context, specifically in a situation involving unprovoked harm, requires further investigation. It is plausible that, through their social experiences in Canadian society, refugees previously exposed to political conflict and chaos have acquired social knowledge about how the tenets of democracy—equality, fairness, and justice—are applied in "peaceful" contexts. When presented with a situation involving unprovoked harm in a Canadian resettlement context, then, the moral principles of rights, respect, fairness, or equality might be more salient. Consider the following statement by a 17-year-old girl: "In Canada the rule is very nice. I can wear my hijab without anybody saying I'm Muslim."

The informational assumptions that participants may carry about law and order in Canada might explain why participants applied an authority/rule justification more frequently to the resettlement context than to the war context for all the conditions—baseline, retribution, and survival. Consider the following statement in the Canadian resettlement retribution condition in response to the question, *Is it alright or not alright for Azeez to hit the boy*:

> Not all right. When you hit him, sometimes they will talk to the police and sometimes they take you and him to jail. [Azeez] can do that, try to talk to the police...Just talk with the police and tell him this boy hit my brother and the police will tell him, don't hit him. The police will talk with his family and tell him if you do that again you will take him to someplace. (13-year-old boy)

The participant's response illustrates the axiomatic belief that the system of justice in Canada is predicated on the rule of law, and supports an adequately functioning police force, referred to collectively as public servants. The participant recognizes that the role of public servants is to protect the safety of the community; hence, social conventions and moral issues are inextricably linked. Social knowledge about Syria as a collapsed state, in which a system of justice is illusory, does not elicit a similar line of social reasoning. Instead, participants hold the assumption that in a war context, the consequence of hitting inevitably leads to the perpetuation or escalation of psychological or physical harm—a prominent theme in interview responses:

> Here in Syria, the fighting that's happening is not all right…because it may spark other things. [It] may spark some damage to the other boy and his parents…some racial ideas. I don't agree with that. (19-year-old girl)

> Because why he would hit him if he will see him cross the street? I see somebody crossing the street so if I would hit him—there's a war in Syria between the groups—so if

> I will hit this boy, there's going to be more war between another group and another group and between countries. So, this makes countries fight with each other (14-year-old boy)

Why welfare—instead of equality—is a priority moral principle in the war context might be explained by the informational assumptions with respect to estimations of risk to one's life. These estimations are higher in a Syrian war than in a Canadian resettlement context. Refugees have a "well-founded fear of persecution" (UNHCR, 1951, p. 3); hence, avoidance of harm is a top priority. Taking this analysis one step further, why welfare is a top priority might be partially explained by Maslow's (1943) widely recognized theory, in which he posited that human beings are motivated to fulfill a hierarchy of needs, the most fundamental of which are physiological and safety needs. Within the framework of social domain theory, when personal safety is presented in conflict with the safety of others, the safety of others takes priority—a finding consistent with that of previous empirical studies (e.g., Ardila-Rey et al., 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008).

Even in the war and resettlement retribution conditions, in which a person has hit the protagonist's family member, the majority of participants expressed concerns about the escalation of harm. Consider the following response to the question, *Is it alright or not alright for [the protagonist] to hit the boy*:

> Because this boy fighting Azeez's brother and Azeez fight this boy and this boy will take [his] friends or brother, and come and fight to Azeez. Small problem will be bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger and big problem. (18-year-old boy)

> Because then Fareeda's family are going to start fighting with the parents. If kids fight, it's nothing. Adult fighting is a problem [because of] injuries or moving cities. (12-year-old girl)

In the retribution condition, although the majority of participants expressed concern for the welfare of others, findings were complex. Unlike baseline and survival conditions, the retribution condition elicited a small but significant number of mixed evaluations, and just about all of these mixed evaluations were provided by older adolescents. Given that one of the key objectives of the present study was to distill age-related differences within the period of adolescence, relevant findings require close examination.

Age-Related Findings

Research over the past several decades within the framework of social domain theory has provided convergent evidence that beginning in early childhood, throughout adolescence, and into adulthood, individuals distinguish between moral and nonmoral issues and reason about these issues accordingly (e.g., Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Turiel, 1981; Turiel & Wainryb, 1998; Wainryb et al., 2005). Previous studies have compared how war-exposed children and adolescents reason about these issues (Ardila-Rey et al., 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008), but have not compared how war-exposed younger and older adolescents reason about these issues. Older adolescents in the Middle East have been particularly active in resistance movements against oppressive regimes and protests against human rights violations, and are, consequently, primary targets of government attacks (Barber, 2009). Therefore, how older adolescents

interpret their experiences might differ from how younger adolescents interpret their experiences, possibly producing age-related differences in moral reasoning.

The present study produced no age-related differences in evaluations of harm in either general assessments of unprovoked harm or contextualized assessments bearing on issues of unprovoked harm and survival. This finding substantiates the findings of similar research conducted in Colombia (Posada & Wainryb, 2008), which forms the cornerstone of the present study. These findings are, therefore, consistent with earlier research based on social domain theory that individuals develop moral principles and reason about moral issues from an early age, regardless of the "moral atmosphere" that surrounds the child.

Although age-related differences did not emerge in situations assumed to be straightforward, as these situations became more complex, younger adolescents differed from older adolescents in their interpretations. Presumably, the retribution conditions were more complex than the baseline (unprovoked) and survival conditions given that the retribution conditions in both Syrian war and Canadian resettlement contexts produced age-related differences. The retribution conditions might be regarded as more complex because the welfare of a family member is presented in conflict with the welfare of another human being. In these conditions, older adolescents were more likely than younger adolescents to provide a mixed evaluation. In the retribution conditions, a boy/girl hits the protagonist's brother. The participant was asked, *Is it alright or not alright for [the protagonist] to hit the boy/girl?* Corresponding justifications to the mixed judgments showed participants weighing the perpetuation of harm, retaliation, prudential concerns (i.e., social consequence to the protagonist) and rules/authority justifications:

> It's alright and it's not in the same time. It's alright because that boy hit his brother and he replied back…because if he didn't do that, the boy will think, "Oh, they are weak," and he will hit him every time he sees him, but it's not alright because he cannot use his hands here and he can go to the police. (18-year-old boy)

As situations become more complex, older children reflect on a more expansive repertoire of social experiences than younger children, which produces more complex interpretations and, hence, mixed social judgments (Turiel, 1983). This might explain why older adolescents more than younger adolescents interpreted the retribution condition in more complex ways. This finding provides evidence for transformations in social knowledge that occur with age as children gain more experience with their social world.

Further analysis of the retribution condition on a story-by-story basis reveals complex age-related differences in the application of justification categories. Specifically, the differences were observed in the Canadian resettlement retribution story, but not in the Syrian war retribution story. In the Canadian resettlement retribution story, older adolescents were disproportionately more likely than younger adolescents to select a moral justification, whereas younger adolescents were equally likely to select a moral justification as a nonmoral justification. No age-related differences emerged in the Syrian war retribution story. These complex age-related findings reflect the transformations in ways of thinking that occur across the developmental period of adolescence. These transformations might only be observable in complex situational contexts that reveal older adolescents' more stable conceptual understandings of social issues. In complex situations that present conflicting social issues in a less familiar context (i.e., Canadian resettlement), moral justifications are more consistently

applied by older adolescents than by younger adolescents. This finding is consistent with Davidson et al. (1983), showing that older children are more likely than younger children to use a welfare justification category for unfamiliar contexts.

Overall, however, age-related findings support the conclusion that the majority of younger and older adolescent Syrian Muslim refugees drew distinctions between moral and nonmoral domains. They made social judgments about harm based on the parameters of these domains and provided corresponding moral justifications for negative evaluations of harm and nonmoral justifications for positive evaluations of harm. Complex situations (i.e., retribution in a Canadian resettlement context), in which multiple moral, conventional and/or personal issues are in conflict, elicit complex reasoning that results in some differences in moral judgments and justifications between younger and older adolescents. However, more straightforward situations (e.g., baseline and survival in the Syrian war context), elicit concordant judgments that harm is morally wrong based on the moral principle of welfare.

Gender-Related Findings

In the present study, no gender differences were found in evaluations of harm, criterion judgments, or justifications in general or contextualized assessments. This finding is consistent with previous studies on war-affected children (Posada & Wainryb, 2008). A view based on Gilligan's (1982) proposition is that girls are more likely to reason in terms of care and welfare of others, whereas boys are more likely to reason in terms of justice and rights. However, the present study did not reveal gender differences in justifications, providing evidence that both types of reasoning might be as common among boys as girls. These results are consistent with those found in previous studies examining gender differences in moral reasoning (e.g., Rothbart, Hanley, & Albert, 1986).

Findings in Cultural Context

The present study of Muslim adolescent refugees from the Middle East newly resettled in Canada raises questions not only about the impact of war but also about the role of culture in moral reasoning. In the field of cultural psychology and anthropology, the concept of culture has been dichotomized and homogenized (Hui & Triandis, 1986: Shweder, 1991). Western societies—where rights and autonomy predominate—have been characterized as individualist. By contrast, non-Western societies—where adherence to community and religious customs predominate—have been characterized as collectivist. Given the presumably bicultural or hybrid context in which Syrian refugees live, the extent to which exposure to Western and non-Western cultures influenced their moral reasoning was worth consideration.

The key finding in the present study was that adolescents from Syria construct judgments about welfare, equal treatment, and rights similarly to adolescents in Western contexts. In other words, findings of the present study did not support the cultural view that moral standards are specific to the group—Western, non-Western, Syrian, Canadian, Middle Eastern, or Muslim, for example (Benedict, 1934). Based on the characterization of the Middle East as collectivist, Syrian refugees might give priority to protecting the safety of their own group over that of a different group. In all stories, the two characters (protagonist and the boy/girl) were presented as

members of different groups. When asked, *Is it alright for [the protagonist] to hit the boy/girl from a different group*?, in all situational contexts, respondents emphasized others' welfare and equal treatment, irrespective of group membership. Furthermore, given that the moral issues were presented in presumably dichotomous cultural contexts—Syrian and Canadian—responses might illustrate a set of distinct moral standards that are specific to each context. However, findings showed that Syrian adolescents do not view moral standards as culturally relative. In other words, moral principles did not vary based on the cultural context (Syria or Canada) in which the story occurred. These findings are antithetical to the ethical relativist perspective that moral development is culturally determined.

This is a notable finding that pivots on the longstanding theoretical assumption that civilizations—Western, Muslim, African, and Latin American, for example—are differentiated not only by social conventional features that include traditions, language, and religion, but also by moral standards. According to this view, these differences generate violent conflict (Huntington, 1993). Within a social-cognitive framework, however, the present study illustrates that morality might not be a differentiating feature between Muslim and Western civilizations. For example, a text query of the 59 interview transcripts showed that the word *Muslim(s)* was used by 14 participants, with specific reference to equality between Muslims and people of other religious groups, the right and freedom to practice one's religion, and the wrongness of war. Consider the following justifications for negative evaluations of harm:

> The Muslim or any religion—everything is the same. (19-year-old girl)
>
> We don't have to stay in the same place…second generation [and] third generation will be the same [as] the oldest one and we will still have the war and we still have [a] bad society like what we have right now in Syria is a bad society because each group [is] fighting with the other group. This group is a Muslim, this group is a Christian fighting to each other. Look where I am right now because of these minds and the society. I am in Canada and back home in Syria, I can't go there and I can't see my family, so it's a bad society. (19-year-old girl)

Overall, Syrian Muslims demonstrated concerns for welfare, equality, fairness, and cultivation of the moral good. This finding is consistent with previous findings of adolescents with cultural affiliations to Western (Wainryb et al., 2005), African (Hollos et al., 1986), Latin American (Posada & Wainryb, 2008), and Islamic civilizations (Turiel & Wainryb, 1998).

Social and Educational Implications

Although the current study adds to the growing body of evidence supporting the theoretical assumption that the judgment that harm is wrong is a universally-held moral prescription that is generalizable to all societies—Western and non-Western, continued research is required to correct inaccurate assumptions. Inaccurate assumptions have become mainstream discourse, sparking polarized political debates that misrepresent Muslims and refugees, precipitating a rise in xenophobia and Islamophobia (Abbas, 2019; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2018). A study conducted at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (Donnelly, 2017) revealed that the majority of the 1,522 participants (representative of the Canadian adult population) have either ambivalent or negative attitudes about refugees. A source of these attitudes is insufficient

exposure and, therefore, lack of knowledge about how refugees think about moral principles of welfare, rights, and equality.

Limited knowledge and inaccurate assumptions about refugees, particularly Muslims, has ramifications in service delivery. Researchers have expressed concern that school systems in Canada do not adequately meet the needs of refugee students because education stakeholders have limited understanding of how refugees are affected by and interpret their experiences (e.g., Rousseau & Guzder, 2008; Stewart, 2017). The knowledge gap leads to strained school relationships and ineffective interventions, and has indirect social consequences in schools, fueling xenophobic or Islamophobic attitudes, bullying, isolation, and peer conflict.

Stewart (2017) provides guiding principles for school professionals working with refugee students that are relevant to the present study. First, she recommends providing students with an opportunity to share their experiences in a safe, supportive environment as a way to access accurate information about how refugee students interpret their social experiences of war and resettlement. Second, she encourages school personnel to be attentive to signs that refugee students are being affected by their experiences of war and resettlement, e.g., signs of concern for the safety of family members or feelings of being threatened.

Adolescent refugees have been confronted with issues of harm throughout each phase of migration (i.e., preflight, flight, and resettlement) and think about these experiences in complex ways. Results of the present study show similarities and differences in the way younger and older adolescents cognitively process events bearing on issues of harm. The findings, therefore, favor a developmental approach to educational service delivery that is differentiated for different age groups.

Conclusions

The Syrian war has been recognized as the most urgent humanitarian crisis of our time (UNHCR, 2019a). Millions of Syrians have experienced and witnessed repeated and severe human rights violations, and the majority of those affected are under the age of 25. Adolescents, in particular, have been at the frontlines of protest and have been primary targets of attack. Many continue to experience bullying and racism after resettlement in Western countries (e.g., Samara, El Asam, Khadaroo, & Hammuda, 2019; Stewart, 2017). Given their vulnerability to the experiences of harm during preflight, flight, and resettlement, my broader aim in the present study was to respond to calls for clinical research that examines the impact of these experiences on their moral development.

War-affected adolescents confront numerous human rights issues that come into conflict with conventional, personal, or other moral considerations. The present study provides evidence to support the theory that refugees from Muslim-majority countries uphold moral principles of welfare, rights, equality, and reciprocity. Similar to their counterparts in Western societies, adolescents from war-affected Syria reason in complex ways. Results of the present study show that newcomer Syrian Muslim refugees in Canada view morality as generalizable and not contingent on societal practice, authority jurisdiction, or rules. Hence, the study contributes to the growing body of evidence that moral principles are universally accepted.

The topic of forced migration provides a plethora of moral issues and multifaceted social contexts to investigate. However, adolescent refugees from Muslim-majority countries have received limited attention. The refugee crisis is expected to continue as a consequence of the protracted violence in Syria and other parts of the world. Due to a dearth of evidence, inaccurate assumptions are framing unfavorable social and political discourse worldwide which, in turn, is guiding discriminatory legislation (Cainkar, 2004) that undermines the moral principles of equal treatment and welfare of all human beings.

As the present study illustrates, adolescent refugees apply abstract reasoning to complex social issues. They are increasingly being recognized as experts in their self-knowledge. Research provides a safe platform for war-exposed adolescents to present their knowledge and correct inaccurate assumptions without fear of reprisal. War-exposed adolescents are being invited to actively engage in research that guides policy agendas. In Guatemala, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Uganda, youth between the ages of 10 and 18 have been recruited as research assistants in studies of the transition from a conflict to a post-conflict society; this involvement has influenced peace talks (UNICEF, 2009). Based on the present study, resettled adolescent refugees from war-torn Syria might be recruited for research that examines their transition to Canada and the social issues they confront at school. War-exposed adolescents have been understudied and underrepresented in research (Barber, 2009). Elevating their level of participation in research that explores their own social experiences has multiple advantages: the validity of the findings are strengthened, inaccurate assumptions are corrected, and policies designed to benefit them are more likely to be effective (Ozer, 2016). In turn, policymakers and service providers are encouraged to provide opportunities for adolescent refugees to construct meaning from their experiences and to participate in the co-construction of services that address the social issues they face (Rousseau & Guzder, 2008). Given the steady influx of adolescent refugees into Canada, their perspectives on social issues are essential. Given findings of the present study, a systematic participatory research and policymaking agenda that positions adolescent refugees at the helm is worthy of formal consideration.

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